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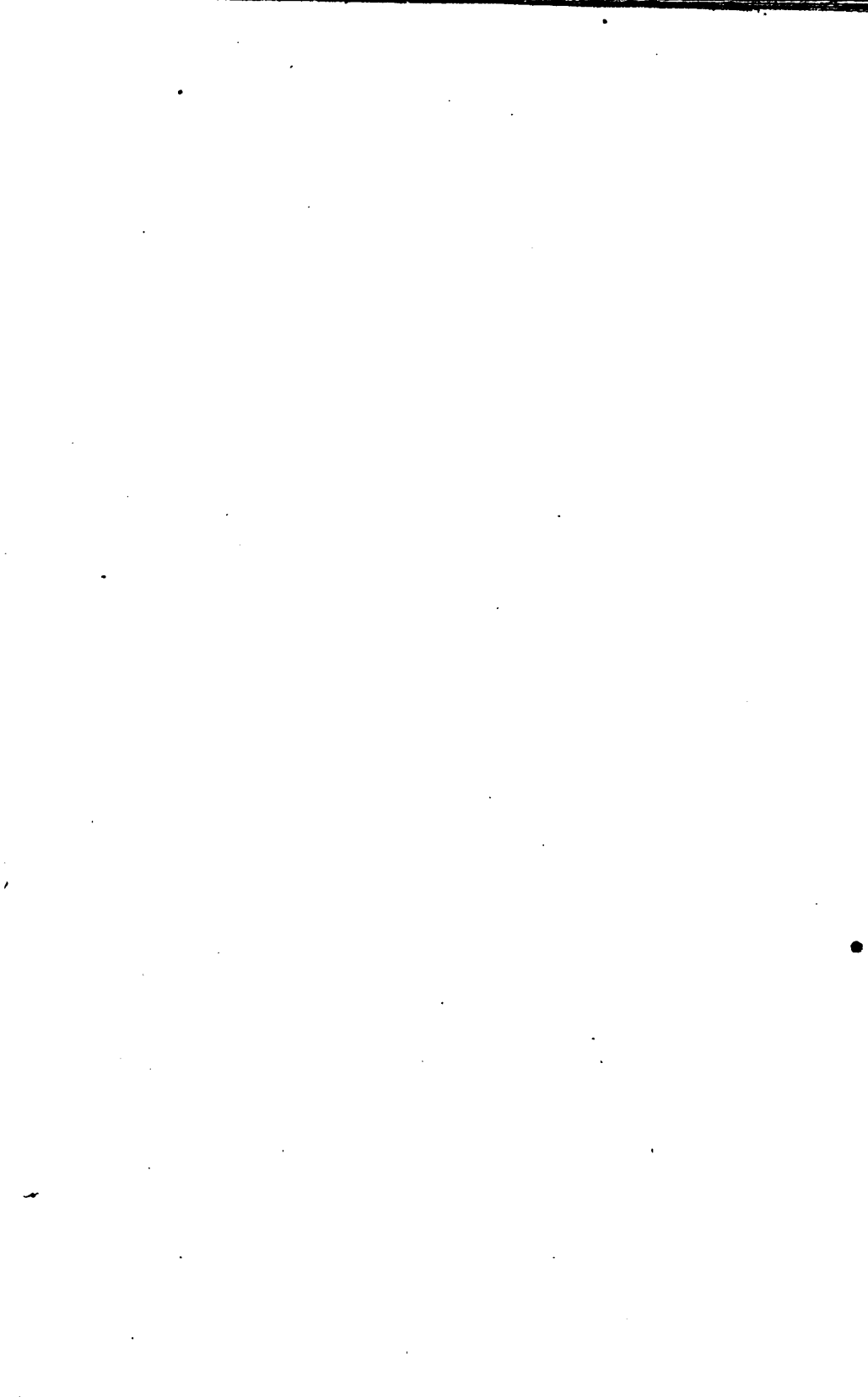


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PRIVILEGES, DUTIES, AND PERILS,
IN THE
ENGLISH BRANCH OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST,

At the Present Time:

SIX SERMONS,

PREACHED IN CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL,

IN

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1850.

BY

BENJAMIN HARRISON, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF MAIDSTONE,
CANON OF CANTERBURY.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following Sermons are committed to the press in accordance with the wish of some who heard them, and the opinion of others who concurred in thinking that the publication of them would be useful at the present time. The subjects of the Sermons were suggested, as will be observed, by the portions of Scripture which formed part of the Service on the consecutive Sundays on which it fell to the writer's lot to take his turn in preaching. It was his desire, following thus the course which appeared to be marked out for him by a better guidance than his own, to offer, in a practical and uncontroversial manner, something in the way of caution and warning, on points in regard to which caution and warning seemed in a more than ordinary degree to be necessary. The reader will bear in

mind that the course of Sermons was completed before the arrival amongst us of the intelligence of that recent aggression of the Roman See which has awakened so strong a feeling throughout the Church, and in the country at large. Notwithstanding, however, the change which has thus taken place in the immediate aspects of the controversy; that which was written with especial reference to the insidious approach of temptation will not, perhaps, as the Author ventures to hope, be the less appropriate or seasonable, though the assault be now more openly and avowedly hostile. If what he has written, should tend, by God's blessing, to put any one more fully on his guard against the perils amidst which, in this time of trial, our path of faith and duty lies, in that communion in which God's good providence has placed us, it will not have been written in vain.

The Author is deeply convinced that in the firm, unwavering maintenance of the distinctive principles of the Church of England is, under the Divine grace and blessing, the great security of England from Romish corruption and usurpation on the one hand, and from latitudinarian infidelity on the other; and that the greatest triumph which

Rome can gain by her recent act of aggression will be, if she can so alarm or mislead our people as to make them confound Catholic and Apostolic truth with Papal novelties and errors, and, by any tampering with our venerable Formularies, dislodge our own Church from the stronghold which she has been enabled thus far, through God's protecting mercy, to maintain and keep ; and thus weaken or impair the force of her protest, and the faithfulness of her testimony, among the Churches of Christendom, to " the faith once delivered to the saints."

Precincts, Canterbury,
Dec. 7, 1850.

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SERMON I'.

THE CLAIMS OF PARENTAL AUTHORITY, AND OF PRIMITIVE DOCTRINE, IN THE CHURCH.

JER. XXXV. 18, 19.

“ And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel ; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you : Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel ; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.”

THERE is something peculiarly interesting in tracing a course of piety and obedience revealing itself from time to time, in some nation, or tribe, or family, from one generation to another. It is like the re-appearing, at intervals, of the waters of some refreshing stream which, if for a while withdrawn out of sight, yet gladden us again with their cheering presence, the more gratefully when it is in the midst of desolation and drought that we come upon them, “ in a barren and dry land where no water is.”

¹ Preached Sept. 8, 1850, being the fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

We have an instance of this in the remarkable history of the tribe or family of whom mention is made in the chapter from the prophet Jeremiah which has been read in this morning's service. Of the ancestor of whom they spoke, Jonadab, or Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, mention is made, you will remember, in the second book of Kings, in the history, there recorded, of Jehu. We read there that after Jehu had executed the judgment, for which he had been divinely commissioned, upon the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and had slain the brethren of Ahaziah, king of Judah, the kinsmen of Ahab's house, on his way to Samaria, "at the shearing-house in the way,"—"when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him : and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart ? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand ; and he took him up to him into the chariot. And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord. So they made him ride in his chariot²." The person here spoken of was evidently one well known for his faithfulness to the cause of the God of Israel, and his zeal for the purity of God's worship and service, amidst general corruption and defection ; so that Jehu might feel confident of his hearty co-operation with him in the work to which he had been called. He accompanied Jehu, accordingly;

² 2 Kings x. 15, 16.

to Samaria, and was with him there when " he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the Lord, which he spake to Elijah." And when afterwards Jehu summoned all the worshippers of Baal throughout Israel to a pretended sacrifice, in order to their destruction, we read that " Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal³," there to destroy Baal out of Israel. Thus much we hear, and no more, of him whose name re-appears again, after an interval of well-nigh three hundred years, in the narrative recorded by the prophet Jeremiah, in the last days of the kingdom of Judah, concerning the descendants of the house of Rechab, and the commandments which Jonadab their father had left to his sons for ever.

But the sacred records enable us to trace further back the history of this remarkable family. In the first book of Chronicles, among the genealogies of the tribe of Judah, we find mention made of " the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez ; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These," it is there said, " are the Kenites that came of Hemath, the father of the house of *Rechab*⁴." And in the first chapter of the book of Judges we are told that, when Judah, first of all the tribes, took possession of his inheritance, " the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children

³ 2 Kings x. 23.

⁴ 1 Chron. ii. 55.

of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad ; and they went and dwelt among the people⁵." One family, indeed, of this tribe, we find shortly after in the history, removed far off to the northern boundary of Israel's inheritance, while these dwelt near to the extreme south ; for " Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh⁶," almost as near to Dan, on the northern border of Canaan, as the other to Beersheba in the south. And thus we find the tents of the Kenite pitched in the borders of Israel's inheritance five hundred and fifty years, nearly, before the time of Jonadab the son of Rechab ; eight hundred years and more before the time when the Rechabites appear again so remarkably on the scene, when Israel had now, for their transgression, been carried captive out of their land by the hand of the Assyrian, and the armies of Nebuchadnezzar were already in the land of Judah, to carry *them* also away to Babylon.

The Kenites, it will have been observed, with whom the house of Rechab are thus identified, are said to be of the children of Hobab (or Jethro), the father-in-law of Moses. And how it was that *his* children came to cast in their lot with Israel we learn from the book of Numbers. In the 10th chapter of that book we are told that " Moses said

⁵ Judges i. 16.

⁶ Judges iv. 11.

unto Hobab, the son of Raguel (or Reuel⁷, the same as Jethro), “ the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law,”—who, as we read in Exodus, had come to him when the tribes, just brought out of Egypt, were encamped near Mount Sinai,—“ We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you : come thou with us, and we will do thee good : for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go ; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee ; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee⁸.” And thus it would seem that, when Jethro parted from Moses, and “ went his way into his own land⁹,” strengthened in his faith in the power of Jehovah, and full of joy and praise for the wonders which He had wrought for His people in their deliverance out of Egypt¹⁰, Hobab, his son, consented to accompany the tribes of Israel, to guide them in their encampings through that wilderness which, as an inhabitant of the desert, he knew so well. And when the tribes, with Judah at their head, took possession of their resting-places in the promised land, the children of the Kenite, faithful to the manner of life of their fathers, would still dwell in their tents, in the

⁷ Exod. ii. 18.

⁸ Numb. x. 29—32.

⁹ Exod. xviii. 27.

¹⁰ Ibid. 9—11.

wilderness of Judah, or on the plain of Zaanaim. There they dwelt, simply and safely, protected for their faithfulness to the cause of God and of His people, when danger was near. For when Saul had received the command to go and smite Amalek, a nation whose country lay southward of Judah¹, he “said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them : for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites².” Invited, as they had been, to enjoy their full share in the benefits and blessings of Israel’s promised inheritance, the children of the Midianite seem to have chosen rather to live as strangers and pilgrims in the land, dwelling in tabernacles as their fathers had dwelt before them. They dwelt there—may we not say ?—as living witnesses that, though the Almighty Father of all the families of the earth seemed now to have drawn the scene of his dispensations of grace within the limits of the heritage of Israel His chosen, it was in order to the accomplishment, in due time, of His purposes of mercy to all the children of men, in the kingdom of the promised Redeemer, when “they that dwell in the wilderness” should “kneel before him,” and “the remnant of his brethren return unto the children of Israel³.”

¹ See 1 Sam. xxvii. 8 ; xxx. 1. 14.

² 1 Sam. xv. 6. Comp. chap. xxvii. 10 ; xxx. 29.

³ Ps. lxii. 9. Mic. v. 3.

But the characteristic manner of life which seems to have been adhered to by the children of Hobab in their dwellings in the land of Israel was distinctly and solemnly enjoined upon the sons of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, with rules and ordinances of peculiar strictness, by the authoritative precept of their father. "Jonadab the son of Rechab our father," thus they told Jeremiah, "commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever : neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any"—any possession : "but all your days ye shall dwell in tents ; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers." And it is of the trial to which they were put, in regard to their obedience to this commandment of their father, and of the exemplary faithfulness which they exhibited therein, to the reproof and condemnation of God's own people, that the prophet has recorded the history, and also the promise with which that faithfulness was signally rewarded by the God of Israel.

It was, indeed, no ordinary trial to which their obedience was exposed. A prophet and a priest of the Most High, one who had now for more than twenty years been delivering his message in the name of the Almighty, and declaring, with Divine authority, the counsels and the judgments of heaven, had come to them, and spoken to them, and brought them "into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers " of that sacred place, and setting before

them "pots full of wine and cups," with evidently fixed purpose and meaning in the act, had "said unto them, Drink ye wine." Here was apparently a command proceeding directly from a Divine source; and on the other side there was, it might have been argued, only a human authority: and, had there been the disposition to transgress the prohibition imposed by that authority, and to enjoy the proffered liberty, how many arguments, as men are wont in such cases to argue, might easily have presented themselves to the sons of the Rechabites. To say nothing of the peculiarly rigid character of their father's commandment, or the singularity, in regard to their manner of life, to which it bound them for ever, it might have been contended, with great plausibility and apparent force of reason, even had no higher sanction spontaneously offered itself, that the rules which had been imposed upon them were now no longer *capable* of being observed, as in time past; that the Rechabites had themselves been obliged, in a main particular, to relax or abandon those ordinances; that they had found it impossible, owing to the peculiar circumstances of the times, to adhere to the rule of dwelling in tents; for that, "when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land," as related in their own words to the prophet, they had "said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem." "We have thus been

compelled," they might have gone on to say, "to depart from *one* part of our father's commandment ; and why should we pretend to maintain strictly the obligation of conscience in regard to another ? Would not this be to ' strain at the gnat and swallow the camel ?' Circumstances are changed, obviously and palpably ; and our practice may well be changed with them, and the view entirely altered which we have hitherto taken, and faithfully acted upon, of the absolute authority of our father's commandment." How many there are who, under similar circumstances, would, without a scruple, have reasoned thus, and have found in the prophet's command an unquestionable dispensation from rules like those of the son of Rechab. " But they said, We will drink no wine : for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us " thus and thus. " And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel ; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you : therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel ; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."

" That this promise, thus solemnly and explicitly made," said a preacher, discoursing on this passage of Scripture, about thirty years ago,— " that this promise has received its exact fulfilment, we have very reasonable grounds to believe ;" and, " that

though the ancient name of the tribe, and the memory of their descent, may perhaps have perished amid the lapse of years, and the political revolutions of Asia, yet the word thus spoken by God has not been suffered to fall to the ground, and that the wanderers of the house of Rechab may still continue to prosper unto the blessing of the Most High, and to cherish amid their wilderness the institutions of their ancestor Jonadab⁴." It appears, however, now as matter of fact, that not even their name, or the memory of their descent, *has* perished, even in the long lapse of ages, from among the children of the desert. Before the words of Bishop Heber were committed to the press, some seven years after they were spoken, a tribe, bearing the name, and answering to the description of the Rechabites, had recently been discovered in Arabia, "at the distance," as was then observed, "of 2500 years from the date of the prediction⁵." There is a tribe, it seems (the Beni Khaibr), dwelling near the chief seats of the false prophet's religion, near Mecca and Medina, concerning whom the Jews in those eastern countries generally believe that they are the descendants of the ancient Rechabites. "These are mighty men, and have not felt the yoke of the captivity," was the testimony borne by one of those Jews to a missionary inquiring concerning

⁴ Heber's Sermons in England, vol. i. pp. 276-7.

⁵ See note by the Editor of Bishop Heber's Sermons, *ibid.* referring to Wolff's Journal, vol. ii. pp. 276. 331-5.

them. "They are the descendants," he went on to say, "of Jonadab the son of Rechab, who said, 'Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever; neither shall ye build houses, nor sow seed;' and thus they do. The children of Ishmael curse them, and we bless them. The sword of Mohammed has not brought them under his yoke." And when one of themselves was asked, "Whose descendant are you?" he said, "Come, I show to you;" and he began to read out of the book of the prophet Jeremiah. And he said, "We drink no wine, and plant no vineyard, and sow no seed, and live in tents, as Jonadab our father commanded us. Hobab was our father too; come to us, you will still find 60,000 in number, and you see thus the prophecy has been fulfilled, 'Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.'"

Now it was not written for his sake only, my brethren, or for his children's sakes, or for their sakes to whom the message of warning and denunciation was sent, the rebellious children of God's own family and people; it was for our sakes, doubtless, this was written, and "for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come⁶." It was for *our* sakes, assuredly, my brethren, that the narrative was recorded on the undying page of Scripture, and the traces left which our own days were

⁶ 1 Cor. x. 11.

to bring to light of the actual fulfilment of the promise. Not, indeed, to gratify a mere historical curiosity; much less that we should read with a cursory eye, and hear with a careless ear, the sacred story of the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab, and turn from it as though we were ourselves but little concerned in what we had heard or read. It is a portion of God's holy Word, which is full of important practical lessons—words of deep warning, and of high and heavenly blessing; and it speaks with peculiar emphasis and meaning to an age like this.

I need hardly point out, in the first place, how powerfully it enforces the precept contained in that "first commandment with promise," which enjoins upon us the duty of reverence to our earthly parents. Of the fifth commandment, the first of the second table, with the promise annexed, "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee;" or, as the Apostle gives it in more general language, "that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long upon the earth'," what a striking exemplification do we find in the history before us! How signally do we see there the fulfilment of that which the patriarchal head of the Rechabites held out to his children, "That ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers." And if this commandment contains

' Eph. vi. 3.

within it, as it does, the germ of all natural piety and relative duty, all the moralities and charities of life, revealing themselves in due place and order, it may be said, still further, that out of it are unfolded also even those duties which we owe immediately to God. For it is by means of earthly relations that we are led up to heavenly⁸; it is from the lips of parents on earth that we learn the knowledge of a Father which is in heaven; and the spirit of childlike docility and submission is thus, in the appointed order of God's providence and grace, transformed into the very spirit of God's most holy fear, of dependence on His will, of reverence and obedience to His word. And though it is the privilege of some, more than of others, to be able to recal recollections of early instruction in the ways of wisdom and godliness, so carefully and diligently inculcated, "line upon line, and precept upon precept," that it is alike their happiness and their security to obey undoubtingly the commandment of an earthly parent, and keep all his precepts, and do according to all that he hath commanded them, —though this be indeed given to some in a greater degree than to others, yet we may lay it down as a general truth, without fear of gainsaying, that the instructions and the precepts which connect themselves with the claims of parental authority are ordinarily to us that first law and commandment, from

⁸ Comp. 1 John iv. 20.

dah, misled by him who pretended to
to reverse the commandment which
elf once received from God¹;—these
over the sons of the house of Rechab,
e their heart was right and their eye
spirit of humility, of reverence, and
a wonderful preservative from error,
cerner of truth and right, even amidst
temptation. “The meek will he guide
and the meek will he teach his way.
of the Lord are mercy and truth unto
his covenant and his testimonies².”
tion which is to try our faithfulness,
sent state of being is appointed to us
trial,—may come from the world, its
customs; its intolerance of any thing
from itself, and which, by differing,
own principles or practice; its ridicule

2. ¹ 1 Kings xiii. ² Ps. xxv. 9, 10.

of any thing which it can stigmatize as singularity, the not doing as other people do, the adhering to what it regards as obsolete opinions, or unenlightened prejudices, the notions of childish simplicity, the scruples of over-much righteousness. And all this is a sore trial, especially to the young; but not to the young alone: for “the spirit of the age,” as it calls itself, has a voice and a frown to intimidate even the full-grown man, and appeals, with more than ordinary confidence, to his sense of manliness, independence, and liberty. But—what is still more to be observed, my brethren—it will come to us under the garb of religion: it will pretend, perhaps, on the one hand, to the freedom of the Gospel, in opposition to antiquated creeds and confessions, to the spirit of superstition and bondage; or, on the other hand, it will offer to our acceptance some captivating system of belief, holding out the indulgence of every aspiration of fancy or feeling, full scope for the imagination or the affections, absolute repose for the intellect, an end to all uncertainty or perplexity, an infallible guide, an undoubted, undoubting representative of Christ Himself upon earth. But whatever may be the ingredients in the cup which, on this side or that, is held out to us; a cup full of wine rich and luscious, claiming to be the pure fruit of the Gospel vine, of the choicest grapes of its Eshcol,—(and we may be sure, the ingredients will be skilfully mingled in endless variety to suit the various tastes of men;—though it look bright and sparkling, “when it giveth

his colour in the cup, and moveth itself aright³,” yet if it be that which hath been forbidden to us by the parental authority of our fathers in the faith, or of the Church, our spiritual mother, let our stedfast answer be that of the sons of the Rechabites, “We will drink none.” It may seem to be a prophet of God that stands before us, or even “an angel of light⁴,” but we will cleave to that which we have been taught by our fathers, and which they had learnt of theirs, even of “the old Catholic fathers and ancient doctors” of Christ’s holy Church in the primitive times; we will hold fast to “the faith which was once—once for all⁵—delivered unto the saints⁶,” we will “hold fast the form of sound words⁷” which we have learnt of her who is our mother in the faith⁸, her Creed and her Catechism; and if men reproach us on the one side or on the other, our answer shall be in the spirit of “the sons of the house of the Rechabites,” or in the words of an apostle of Christ, when he stood at the bar of the Roman governor, “This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I *the God of my fathers*, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets⁹.”

In whatever way the trial may come which is to prove what manner of spirit we are of—for tried we

³ Prov. xxiii. 32.

⁴ 2 Cor. xi. 14.

⁵ ἀπαξ.

⁶ Jude 3.

⁷ 2 Tim. i. 13.

⁸ Comp. 2 Tim. i. 5.

⁹ Acts xxiv. 14. Comp. 2 Tim. i. 3, “I thank God, whom I serve *from my forefathers* with pure conscience.”

must be here, if we would be received hereafter—may we, my brethren, be found ever faithful to Him who is our Father and our God, our Almighty unseen Father in heaven; obeying His word, keeping all His precepts, and doing according to all that He hath commanded us. So may we have the privilege of learning and knowing by happy experience, how faithful, to them that love and fear Him, is He who “will not suffer” us “to be tempted above that” we “are able¹⁰,” and who in His Divine jealousy, “visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation,” doth “shew mercy unto thousands in them that love” Him, “and keep” His “commandments.”

¹⁰ 1 Cor. x. 13.

SERMON II.¹

THE ONE FOUNDATION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

MATT. xvi. 18.

“ Upon this rock I will build my Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

IN considering lately the duties and the privileges which belong to the spirit of filial obedience, as commended to us by example, not less powerfully than by precept, in the pages of Holy Writ, we were called to notice the application of the principle thence derived to the all-important province of *religious truth*. We were reminded by the lessons of historical Scripture, how great is the blessedness of those who have a rule of belief, as well as of practice, delivered down to them with the sanctions of parental authority, and who can refer, with undoubted confidence of heart and mind, to that which hath been *once* taught them, in the formularies of the Church, as derived originally from those to whom

¹ Preached Sept. 15, 1850, being the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

the Gospel of Christ first came "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," that their "faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God²."

And that we are authorized, in the Church of Christ, thus to look back to that which was *first* delivered by His Apostles to the several Churches which they founded in the earth, as something having an authority never to be superseded or set aside even to the end, we learn from the plain declarations of those inspired Apostles themselves. When the Galatians had fallen from their stedfastness, what was it to which that Apostle whose disciples and converts they were, sought to recal them? What was it but the doctrine which they had originally learnt of him? "I marvel," he says, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed³." And this, again, in like manner, was the object with which St. Jude wrote to his brethren in the faith, when false teachers had

² 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

³ Gal. i. 6—9. See Note A.

“crept in unawares” to seduce them. “Beloved,” he says, “when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once”—“once for all” (for that is the meaning of the word)—“once for all,” in all its integrity and perfection, “delivered unto the saints⁵.” And that this was the ground on which the Church of England took her stand in that Reformation of religion, which had been rendered necessary by departures in the Roman Church from ancient belief and practice, abundant proof might be furnished. The words of Bishop Jewel, in his well-known “Apology of the Church of England,” will suffice, where he says, “We are come as near as we possibly could to the Church of the Apostles, and of the old Catholic,”—the truly Catholic,—“bishops and fathers, . . and have directed according to their customs and ordinances, not only our doctrine, but also the sacraments, and the form of common prayer⁶.” And, assuredly, in the distinctive principles of our mother, the Church of England, will be found by her faithful children a safeguard and a resting-place amidst the fluctuations of religious opinion, the ever-varying tides and currents of a restless age;—a rock, on which we may feel that our feet are

⁴ ἀπαξ.

⁵ Jude 3.

⁶ See Lady Bacon's translation, (edited, for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, by the Rev. R. W. Jelf, D.D., 1849,) p. 135.

securely placed, if we be but true to ourselves, and to the goodness of God towards us ; and, being “ henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ ’.”

The words before us, which are commended to our consideration as occurring in the chapter which has been read as the second lesson, form a text which has been employed with much confidence, and, unhappily, oftentimes with much effect, to persuade men that they have no solid foundation for their faith, or consequent safety for their souls, unless they admit the pretensions, and submit themselves to the authority, of that one among the Churches of Christendom, which arrogates to herself the exclusive claim to be the Church, the only true Church of Christ ; putting forward as a palmary argument for her claim the promise of our Lord to St. Peter ; whose successor, and the inheritor of his high prerogatives, the Bishop of Rome, on very slender grounds of Scripture or primitive antiquity, claims to be. But if, in conformity with the true principles of the Church of England, we appeal to the general consent of the first ages of the Christian Church for the interpretation of Christ’s word and promise, we find no authority for recognizing any

⁷ Eph. iv. 14, 15.

such charter as contained in them, no such limitations of the "Church," which Christ declared that He would establish in the earth, no such reference to the bishop of any one see, however privileged or distinguished, as if he or it were the one perpetual foundation of the universal Church of Christ.

That the words of our Blessed Lord, addressed as they were to His zealous and warm-hearted disciple, Simon the son of Jonah, had a primary reference to him personally, we may well consent freely to acknowledge, considering especially the new name which our Lord had Himself given to that disciple, and to which He here refers,—a name describing him as a "stone." We read in St. John's Gospel that when Andrew, having heard the testimony which the holy Baptist his master had borne to Christ, as "the Lamb of God," had sought out his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus, "when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone,"—or, as it is in the Greek, "Peter^s." And now, when that disciple had given proof, by the good confession which his lips had declared, of the strength of his faith in his divine Lord, his new name is, as it were, solemnly ratified and confirmed to him, and that in connexion with a promise which has immediate reference to the import of the name itself. When, in reply to the

^s John i. 42. Comp. margin E. V. "or, *Peter*."

question of his Lord, "Whom say ye that I am?" "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," "Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona (son of Jonah) : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

So far, however, as the character of a "stone" is thus attached, in this promise, to St. Peter himself, in relation to the foundation on which the Church was to be built, the privilege is not confined to himself, though we regard him as having been (as we may say) the first stone laid in that sacred fabric by its Divine Founder and Builder. To him, indeed, it was further said by our Blessed Lord, in the words immediately following the text, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven : " and it was by his ministry on the great day of Pentecost that the kingdom of heaven was first preached to his countrymen of the house of Israel, and three thousand of them admitted into the Church of Christ by baptism. By his ministry, again, it was that the door of faith was first opened to the Gentiles, in the conversion and baptism of the centurion Cornelius ; for, as St. Peter himself expressed it, in the first council of

the Apostles assembled at Jerusalem, " God made choice among " them " that the Gentiles by " *his* " mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe⁹." Thus did St. Peter fulfil the ministry which was specially appointed to him, of the keys of the kingdom of heaven ;" but to *all* his brethren of the Apostles' company, no less than to himself, it was said by their Divine Lord, as is recorded by St. Matthew in a later chapter, in reference to the authority to be exercised in that same Church¹⁰ of which He here spake to St. Peter specially, " Verily I say unto *you*, Whatsoever *ye* shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever *ye* shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven¹."

And in conformity with this deduction from a comparison of the *two* occasions on which our Lord thus spake—the one, it would appear, following at no great distance upon the other—we find that if, in the passage before us, St. Peter, the first in order of " the glorious company of the Apostles," the foremost in zeal for his Master's service, the spokesman in his brethren's name on this and other occasions², is declared by that gracious Master and Lord to be the first stone wherewith He would begin to lay the foundation of His Church, yet at the same time his brethren of the apostolic company were to be privileged to share with him the dignity and honour of forming part of that Divine foundation. In the

⁹ Acts xv. 7.

¹⁰ Matt. xviii. 17.

¹ Matt. xviii. 18.

² Comp. Matt. xix. 27 ; John vi. 67—69 ; &c.

visions of the Revelation, St. John beheld "that great city, the holy Jerusalem," the Church of Christ in her predicted glory, "descending out of heaven from God;" "and the wall of the city had *twelve foundations*, and in them the names of the *twelve Apostles of the Lamb*." And, in like manner, St. Paul says to his Gentile converts and brethren of the Church of Ephesus, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon *the foundation of the Apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit⁴."

When thus we find St. Paul speaking of "the foundation of the Apostles and prophets" as that on which the Church of Christ is built, and then at once pointing to Another, even their Divine Lord, "Jesus Christ Himself," as "the chief corner-stone," it will not appear strange if the promise which seemed, in the first instance, to have a special reference to Simon Peter, were found, in a yet higher and fuller sense, to point to Him on whom the faith of Simon Bar-jona was firmly fixed, even to Him whom the Everlasting Father, in the manifestation of the counsels of eternity, had revealed as

³ Rev. xxi. 10. 14.

⁴ Eph. ii. 19—22.

“ the head of the corner.” And this view would be confirmed by observing, that the word which designates the “ rock ⁵ ” on which He would build His Church is not precisely the same in form, though closely connected in derivation, with that name which was given to Simon Bar-jona, of Peter ⁶, or Cephas, “ which is by interpretation a stone.” And this variation would seem to have its special meaning, leading us on from regarding St. Peter in himself to fix our thoughts rather on Him from whom that blessed disciple derived all his strength and steadfastness, even on Him upon whom his faith rested as none other than the very “ Son of the living God.” And thus, while we recognize the pre-eminence which, by Christ’s own lips, it would seem, was assigned to His faithful disciple as the spokesman and head of the Apostolic brotherhood—of that faithful, and highly-favoured, and “ glorious company,” by whose labour and ministry, by whose preachings and sufferings, by whose holy lives and self-devoting deaths, Christ, our Redeemer and only Saviour, would plant His Church in all lands,—this nevertheless was to be regarded ever as the one only source of their firmness and faith, this the foundation on which they themselves rested, the sure foundation on which all their hopes were placed ; even the Divine truth which their hearts believed and their lips confessed, that Jesus was the Christ,

⁵ πέτρα.

⁶ Πέτρος.

the Son of the living God. It is thus that we find St. Paul declaring concerning himself, “ I live ; yet not I, but *Christ* liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the *faith* of the *Son of God*, who loved me, and gave Himself for me⁷. ”

And with this agree the words of St. Peter himself in his first epistle ; where, in the second chapter (as our translators have given the argument, which he there addresses to his brethren of the dispersion) “ he dehortheth them from the breach of charity, shewing that Christ is the foundation whereupon they are built.” “ To whom coming,” he says, “ as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ⁸. ” The image of the spiritual house, or temple, built on that one living Stone which God had laid for the foundation and corner-stone of His Church, accords exactly with the language already quoted, of the other great Apostle, the Apostle of the Gentiles ; where, as we have seen, he speaks to them as built together with the faithful children of the chosen race, built on one foundation, designed to form with them one “ holy temple in the Lord,” one “ habitation of God through the Spirit,” “ fitly framed together” in Him who was “ the chief corner-stone,” even “ Jesus Christ Himself⁹. ”

⁷ Gal. ii. 20.

⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

⁹ Eph. ii. 20—22.

shall not be confounded. Unto which believe," the Apostle con-
precious : but unto them which be
stone which the builders disallowed,
le the head of the corner, and a stone
nd a rock of offence, even to them
at the word, being disobedient :
they were appointed²."

primarily referred to, and quoted by
very remarkable one in the book of
ah ; but the holy Apostle alludes at
in the comment which he makes on
sacred prophecy, to another passage
closely combines with this, and which
book of Psalms. The words of the
e mouth of His prophet Isaiah were
d, I lay in Zion for a foundation a
one, a precious corner-stone, a sure

² 1 Pet. ii. 6—8.

foundation : he that believeth shall not make haste³,”—a passage of ancient Scripture, which St. Paul, as well as St. Peter—the two chief Apostles being found here also in close agreement with each other—has quoted in its application to his own countrymen, bearing thereby his concurrent witness to the fulfilment of the prophecy in Christ. “They stumbled at that stumbling-stone,” says the Apostle St. Paul, speaking of the disobedient and unbelieving of the house of Israel, “as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence : and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed⁴.”

The passage in the Book of Psalms, to which St. Peter further alludes, is specially remarkable as having been referred to by our Blessed Lord Himself when He had delivered to the chief priests and elders the significant parable of the husbandmen and the vineyard. “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner : this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ? Therefore I say unto you, the

³ Isa. xxviii. 16.

⁴ Rom. ix. 32, 33. The Apostle incorporates in his citation the language of another passage of the prophet Isaiah closely resembling this : “And he shall be for a sanctuary ; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.”

kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken : but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder ⁵." And, as our Blessed Lord Himself had thus referred the faithless rulers of His countrymen to the Psalmist's prophetic words, so, after His resurrection, did St. Peter, when brought before the council, witness with all boldness his good confession to the Divine power and authority of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, whom God had raised from the dead. "This," he said, "is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved ⁶."

Thus does "the foundation of the Apostles and prophets" rest securely on a rock—even "the rock of ages." For it is in reference to the holy city of God, His Church, and to Him who is the only hope and strength of His people, that the evangelical prophet employs this sacred term. "In that day," saith the prophet Isaiah, "shall this song be sung in the land of Judah ; We have a strong city : salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. . . .

⁵ Matt. xxi. 42—44.

⁶ Acts iv. 11, 12. Compare 1 Cor. iii. 11. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." See Note B.

Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength,"—or literally (as it is given in the margin of our translation), "in the Lord JEHOVAH is the rock of ages⁷." Christ, the everlasting Son of the Father, "His only Son, our Lord,"—"the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten not made, Being of one substance with the Father," the Heir of all things, He "by whom all things were made," one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the co-equal Godhead of the Eternal Ever-blessed Trinity,—“the Son of the living God,” made for us the Son of man; “for us men and for our salvation,” incarnate and born of a virgin, and in that human nature crucified, dead, and buried; then raised again from the dead by the glory of the Father, and “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead⁸ ;” this was the very foundation, the cornerstone of the doctrine of Christ’s Apostles, and of the Churches which they planted far and wide over the earth, in the east and the west, in the north and the south, “from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum⁹ ;” “beginning at Jerusalem¹,” where in the upper chamber on Mount Sion, that first Church was planted of which it may be said, as it cannot

⁷ Isa. xxvi. 4.

⁸ Rom. i. 4.

⁹ Rom. xv. 19.

¹ Luke xxiv. 47.

be said of Rome, that it was “the mother of all Churches;” and spreading thence its branches, and shooting forth its suckers on every side, until “the hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedar trees² ;” and they who were once farthest off, the rude barbarians of the West, and amongst them our own pagan forefathers in these distant isles of the ocean, were made to be “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ;” for the feet of Apostles or of Apostolic men in the early ages of the Gospel had travelled even hither ; and here, in the very days of the savage Britons, was planted a Church of Christ³. Thus did Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, according to His own most true promise, build His Church—His holy Catholic Church—truly Catholic, that is to say, universal—the whole building, the whole body, not one only member, one only pillar, but many—thus did He build it on His Apostles, as the foundation, and on His Apostles’ faith ; on the Divine object of that faith ; on Himself, God and Man in one Person ; even thus did He build His Church. And, assaulted as it has been in all ages, and beleaguered by the enemy, its foes many and mighty, and fiercely banded together, with the craft and subtilty of the devil and man combined for its destruction, there hath been One mightier in its defence than they that were against it, even He

² Ps. lxxx. 10.

³ See Bramhall, Usher, Stillingfleet, &c.

who said, and hath performed the word, "the gates of hell," the councils of the Evil One, "shall not prevail against it."

But that which concerns us most deeply, my brethren, each for himself, is to see that we be indeed firmly fixed upon that one foundation. It is not enough that by our baptism we have been once planted into Christ, unless we also "abide in him ⁴." In Him, as the Apostle hath taught us, "all the building fitly framed together *groweth* unto an holy temple in the Lord;" in Him, if we are true members of His spiritual body, living stones of that temple, we must be "*builded* together for an habitation of God through the Spirit ⁵." The promise to Christ's disciples is made on this condition: "*If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled* ⁶, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard ⁷;" "*rooted and built up* in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving ⁸." And this can only be by cleaving closely unto Him, "by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified," and who, in becoming for us the Son of man, hath condescended to identify Himself in closest union with us, even as the stones are cemented together in a firmly-compacted building, or as the members are joined in one body,

⁴ John xv. 4. 1 John ii. 28.

⁵ Eph. ii. 21, 22.

⁶ τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἑδραῖτοι.

⁷ Col. i. 23.

⁸ Col. ii. 7.

partaking of one and the same principle of life and strength. Let us, then, diligently avail ourselves of every means of strengthening and confirming our union with Him, in whom alone is spiritual life and strength—in the united worship of His Church, in private prayer, in the hearing and reading of His word, in humble waiting daily upon His heavenly guidance, and the revelation of His will concerning us. Especially let us prize highly, and faithfully improve, the privilege vouchsafed to us of holding high communion and fellowship with Him in those holy mysteries of His own Divine appointment, wherein, if “with a true penitent heart and lively faith” we draw nigh thither, “we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us.” So shall the Apostle’s prayer for his Ephesian converts be fulfilled to us and in us through the mercy of Him, even “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,” “that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love”—love duly cherished and deepened within us by the contemplation of “the great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, dying for us,” “may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

* Epistle for the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

SERMON III.¹

THE UNITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND OF THE
CHRISTIAN FAITH.

EPHES. iv. 4—6.

“ There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

IN these words, which have just been read in the Epistle for this day, the Apostle is exhorting his converts to Christian unity, on the ground of the special privileges of which they had been made partakers by their incorporation into one body in Christ. In the opening verse of the chapter, the inspired Apostle had returned to the main thread of his discourse, from which he had been led away for a while by the thoughts which crowded upon his mind when he made mention of the ministry which he had been intrusted to fulfil to the Gentiles.

¹ Preached Sept. 22, 1850, being the seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

“ For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,”—thus he had begun his exhortation in the opening of the third chapter ; but he is carried away at once to enlarge, with holy eloquence, on that great mystery of salvation for the Gentile world, which had been made known to him by special revelation, with grace given to him to preach the glad tidings of reconciliation for a lost world. And then he pours forth that fervent prayer for his Ephesian brethren which formed the Epistle for last Sunday, entreating for them that, through the inward might of the Spirit, the in-dwelling of Christ in their hearts by faith, and the deep-rooting and grounding of their spirits in love, they might be enabled to comprehend and know that love which passeth knowledge ; and then finally offers up his ascription of praise “ unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”

The Apostle then takes up again the main line of his argument, grounding the exhortation which he was going on to address to them—an exhortation to unity—on the view which he had been opening to them before of the privileges of their Christian calling. He had been speaking, in the second chapter, of the union of Jew and Gentile in one body ; they who “ sometime were afar off ” having now “ been made nigh by the blood of Christ.” “ For he,” saith the Apostle, “ is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the

middle wall of partition between us ; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances ; for to make in himself of twain *one* new man, so making peace ; and that he might reconcile both unto God in *one body* by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby : and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by *one Spirit* unto the Father. Now therefore," the Apostle continues, " ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord : in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

" For this cause," the Apostle proceeds, in the beginning of the third chapter, " For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,"—or as he resumes his discourse again in the chapter before us—" I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And the language in which he goes on to declare, in its several particulars, the

unity in which Christians should be bound together, will be more fully understood when taken thus in connexion with what had gone before, and which, though separated by the parenthetical discourse just referred to, is yet closely connected with what follows respecting the "one new man," the "one body" in which Christ suffered on the cross, the "one Spirit" by whom Jew and Gentile had alike "access" through Christ "unto the Father."

"There is one body," saith the Apostle in the words before us, "and one Spirit." Christ, having taken upon Him our nature, and having clothed Himself in our flesh, wearing a mortal body, the body of our humiliation, had thereby taken unto Himself another body also, a mystical body, prepared for Him out of this our mortal race, and comprising within it all who by one Spirit should be joined unto Him by a living faith through agencies and means of His own Divine appointment. And of this spiritual, mystical body of Christ, we have a view unfolded to us more and more fully as we follow on the teaching of the holy Apostle from one epistle to another. To the Romans first he says, "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are *one body* in Christ, and every one members one of another¹." To the Corinthians, in like manner: "For as the body is one, and hath many members,

¹ Rom. xii. 4, 5.

and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body ; so also is Christ. For by *one Spirit* are we all baptized into *one body*, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit³.” Thus do we trace, gradually unfolding, the doctrine contained in the text, of “one body” and “one Spirit;” and we further learn that it is through baptism, as the instrumental means, that we are by one Spirit incorporated into one body. And this we trace still further in the Epistle which follows next, to the Galatians. There we find reference made to one spiritual body as the recipient of spiritual blessing, and that body identified with Christ Himself as incarnate for our redemption. “To Abraham and his seed,” saith the Apostle, “were the promises made. He saith not, Unto seeds, as of many ; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female : for ye are all *one* in Christ Jesus⁴.” And thus we come, in due order, to the Epistle before us, to read there of “one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

³ I Cor. xii. 12, 13.

⁴ Gal. iii. 16. 26—28.

and quickened, moved and regu-
one Spirit :” it is a body, as we
the Apostle’s language, having
s” bound together by a common
mon duties. As he reminds his
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cannot say unto the hand, I have
nor again the head to the feet, I
you’.” All are necessary to the
l of each :—the different ranks in
ers orders in the ministry of the
ous offices which are to be fulfilled
members, high and low, rich and
another,—all have their appointed
duties, and requiring, in turn, the

r Good Friday.

⁶ Rom. viii. 9.

1 Cor. xii. 14. 18. 21.

performance of duties to them; all having been ordered by the Divine Creator and Lord of all to this end,—“that there should be no schism in the body: but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it ⁸.”

And this leads us on, from speaking of the “one body,” and its many members, to speak of the “one Spirit,” by which it is inhabited within, and which manifests itself in its outward acts. For that it is indeed “one Spirit” by which the whole body—the “one body”—of Christ’s Church is governed and sanctified, St. Paul fully and emphatically teaches in the same place. “There are diversities of gifts,” he says, “but the same Spirit.” . . . And “the manifestation of the Spirit,” he tells us, “is given to every man to profit withal:” and whatever gift it be, whether it be “the word of wisdom,” or “the word of knowledge,” or “faith,” or “prophecy,” whether it be, as were those first gifts, of extraordinary character, or whether it be the ordinary operations of God’s effectual grace, and heavenly illumination, it is equally true that “all these worketh that *one* and *the self-same* Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will ⁹.” One gift, however, there is, as the Apostle in that place goes on to declare ¹, which, more than any other, marks the presence

⁸ 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26.

⁹ 1 Cor. xii. 4. 7—11.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii.

“there is one body, and one Spirit,
called ⁴ in one hope of your calling,”
of eternal life, which God that cannot
before the world began ⁵.” This was
which St. Paul spake before Agrippa,
of the promise made of God unto the
hope which had been given to them
seed of Abraham, in whom all the
earth were to be blessed.

Apostle goes on to declare, there is
—“one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom
and we by him ⁷.” “For by him were
and that are in heaven, and that are in
and invisible, whether they be thrones,
or principalities, or powers, all things
by him, and for him ; and he is before
by him all things consist : and he is

³ 1 John iv. 12, 13.

⁵ Tit. i. 2.

⁷ 1 Cor. viii. 6.

the head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven^a." And "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (he is *Lord of all*,) that word, I say, ye know," said St. Peter, when he first preached the glad tidings of salvation to the Gentile world in the house of Cornelius, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power^b;"—even Him, of whom the same Apostle had before testified in Jerusalem, when he preached to the assembled multitude of his countrymen on the day of Pentecost, that God had "made that same Jesus whom" they had "crucified, both *Lord* and Christ^c."

And, as there is thus "one" only "Lord," so is there "one" only "faith" in Him. "I believe in *one Lord*," thus we professed with our lips just now, in the holy Creed which was borne on our voices in solemn strains on high,—“in *one Lord* Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds,” “by whom all things

^a Col. i. 16—20.^b Acts x. 36—38.^c Acts ii. 36.

were made ;” He “ sitteth on the right hand of the Father : And he shall come again with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead : Whose kingdom shall have no end.” This is the “one faith” in that one Lord, which in the one body, His Church, is faithfully preserved and cherished from age to age, by the ever-living power of the one Spirit. For, in the words of one of the early fathers of the Church², himself the disciple of one³ who had been the disciple of St. John, “the Church although spread throughout the world, even to the utmost bounds of the earth, having received from the Apostles and their disciples the faith in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of the seas, and all that in them is ; and in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was incarnate for our salvation : and in one Holy Ghost, who through the prophets preached the dispensations, and the advents, and the birth of a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven, in flesh, of the beloved Christ Jesus our Lord, and His coming from heaven in the glory of the Father, to gather together all things in one, and to raise from the dead all flesh of all mankind : that, according to the good pleasure of the invisible Father, every knee may bow to Christ Jesus our *Lord*, and God, and Saviour, and King,

² Irenæus.

³ Polycarp.

of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue may confess to Him ; and that He may execute just judgment upon them all, and send into eternal fire the spirits of wickedness, and the angels that sinned and were in rebellion, and the ungodly, and unjust, and lawless, and blasphemous amongst men ; and bestowing life upon the just and holy, and those who have kept His commandments, and remained in His love, some from the beginning, and some after repentance, might give them incorruption, and clothe them with eternal glory ;—having received this preaching, and this faith, as we said before, the Church, though dispersed throughout the world, keeps it diligently, as though dwelling in one house, and believes alike these things, as having one heart, and one soul, and with one voice proclaims, and teaches, and delivers down this, as though she had but one mouth. For, although the languages throughout the world are different, yet the power of the doctrine delivered down is one and the same. And neither have the Churches which are planted in the countries of Germany believed otherwise, or delivered otherwise, nor those which are in Spain, nor among the Gauls, nor in the East, nor in Egypt, nor in Libya, nor those which are planted in the mid countries of the world : but as the sun, created by God, is in the whole world one and the same, even so the preaching of the truth shineth every where, and lighteneth

all men who will come to the knowledge of the truth⁴."

Thus, then, there is, "one Lord, one faith," and, as the Apostle goes on to declare, "one baptism." For it is into this one faith that all are baptized; being all, according to the Apostle's language already quoted, "by one Spirit baptized into one body," and so made members of that one body of which Christ is the head. And every one who by his baptism is "made a member of Christ," is thereby made also "the child of God," and, by virtue of that spiritual adoption, "an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." And thus are they who have been "called, in one hope of" their "calling," to the inheritance of His kingdom and glory⁵, led up, through the revelation made to them in Christ, their Divine Head and Lord, "unto all riches of the full assurance of un-

⁴ Irenæus, *contra Hæreses*, lib. i. cap. 10. 1. Compare lib. iii. cap. 4. 1. See Beaven's Account of S. Irenæus, chap. x. "Irenæus, indeed, does not distinctly copy any creed; but he rehearses all the chief points of it in" the "two different passages" referred to above; "these being the first clear traces we have of the primitive creed." The statement which Irenæus makes of the essential uniformity of the one creed every where, is strikingly confirmed by the ancient creeds of different churches, and the traces of them discoverable in the early writers, compared together. All bear witness to what Tertullian calls "the one, fixed, unchangeable rule of faith" (see Bishop of Lincoln's Tertullian, p. 303), and bear witness against the novel, unauthorized additions made to the ancient Catholic Creed by the Church of Rome.

⁵ 1 Thess. ii. 12.

derstanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge⁶." They are privileged to ascend, through the fellowship of the Co-eternal Son to the knowledge of the Everlasting Father, even of the " one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." They are taught to know, with a practical and real knowledge, as the children of the Most High, that " there is *one God the Father*, of whom are all things, and we in him," as well as " one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him⁷."

And if thus, my brethren, there is indeed " one body " in Christ, of which we all are members ; and if it be the duty of all, by virtue of that their relation to the body, to care for each other's welfare, and bear each other's burdens, I need not bestow many words to prove how strong is the claim of our poorer brethren, in the appointed order of God's providence, and in fulfilment of the requirements of His Gospel, upon those who possess the means of relieving their necessities⁸. So essential is the welfare of the poorer classes especially, in the body politic, to the well-being of the whole, that least of

⁶ Col. ii. 2, 3.

⁷ 1 Cor. viii. 6.

⁸ Collections were to be made in the Cathedral, and the other Churches in Canterbury, on the Sunday on which this Sermon was preached, for the Canterbury Model Schools. What was merely of local concern has been, of course, omitted ; but the allusion it seemed better to retain, with this explanation of the context.

all can "the head" say "to the feet, I have no need of you²." Nay, such "abundant honour" hath God, in His wisdom and mercy, given to those in the body who might have seemed in themselves to be "less honourable," that He hath made the poor to be in an especial sense His own representatives¹, appointed by Him to receive, as on His behalf, the tokens of our love towards Him. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the *least* of these my brethren," He shall one day declare, "ye have done it unto me¹."

And if this be so in regard even to the works of mercy performed towards the perishing body—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the prisoner²—how much more in regard to the spiritual necessities of the soul, of the undying spirit which must live for ever, in the mansions of heavenly bliss, or in the regions of darkness and despair. In these respects, especially, if there be indeed within us a portion of that "one Spirit" by which the "one body" of Christ is animated and governed, we shall feel a tender care to supply, so far as in us lies, that which is to our brethren's spirits the one thing needful. For "that the soul be without knowledge"—the knowledge of Him that made it, knowledge of its present state of probation, of its capacities of happiness and misery never ending, and of the solemn realities of the world unseen—to be without this is hunger and

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 21.

¹ Matt. xxv. 45.

² Matt. x. 35—44.

nakedness, sickness and misery, far worse than any that can afflict the body. And in order to the imparting of such spiritual knowledge with the hope of good effect, *early* instruction and *early* training are of paramount importance. “Train up a *child* in the way he should go,” saith the wise man, “and when he is old, he will not depart from it³.” And to afford such instruction and training is especially our duty towards those who are “heirs together” with us “of the grace of life⁴,” baptized by one Spirit into one body with ourselves, called in one hope of their calling to a like share with us in the privileges and blessings of the Christian covenant. They have been “called” by the mercy of their “heavenly Father,” “to this state of salvation through Jesus Christ” their “Saviour;” but if they be not taught what is the will of their Father which is in heaven, and how they ought to walk so as to please God,—taught to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him with all the heart, with all the mind, with all the soul, and with all the strength; if they be not duly instructed in all the Articles of their Christian Faith, all that they by their sureties professed to believe and promised to do, when in their baptism they were made members of Christ, and incorporated into God’s family and household; how shall they rightly believe and know the “things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul’s

³ Prov. xxii. 6.

⁴ 1 Pet. iii. 7.

health ;” how shall they “ know what is the hope of their calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints ⁵ ;” how shall they acknowledge and obey their “ one Lord,” confess with the heart, as well as with the lips, the “ one faith,” realize in themselves the benefits and blessings of the “ one baptism,” or love and fear and worship and obey, as becometh His true children, the “ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all ?”

It is for the carrying on of such a work as this, the work of Christian education in conformity with the principles of the Church, that we appeal to-day to the Christian liberality of those who in this place are gathered together, in the several congregations of the Church, as one body, with one spirit joined together in the service and worship of God. It is assuredly a good work to which you are invited to lend your aid, a work full of present blessing and of promise for the future—even for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. “ Every man,” therefore, “ according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you ; that ye, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work : . . . being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God ⁶ .”

⁵ Eph. i. 18.

⁶ 2 Cor. ix. 7, 8, 11.

SERMON IV.¹

COMMUNION, IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, WITH
ANGELS.

MATT. XVIII. 10.

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”

WE have been lately led, by the passages of Holy Scripture which have come before us in the due course of our Sunday services, to consider the blessings and the duties which belong to us by virtue of our Christian inheritance, descending to us through a long and sacred line from the first days of the Church of God upon earth. We have been led to survey that strong foundation of our faith on which all our privileges as members of Christ, and all our hopes for eternity can alone securely rest,—that “rock” on which He Himself declared that He would build His Church, and that

¹ Preached on Sunday, Sept. 29, being the Feast of St. Michael and all Angels.

“one Spirit;” its members being all
“one hope of” their “calling:” a body,
Divine Head “one Lord,” professing
and acknowledging “one baptism;”
holy family, of the children of a hea-
venly Father “one God and Father of all,
through all, and through all, and in you all.”
We have been led onward from step to
step, in review of the privileges of our voca-
tion, as the Apostle has elsewhere brought
before us new words, where he says, contrasting
our position with that of his brethren of the Hebrews with
whom they were found under the elder cove-
nant, “we have come unto Mount Sion, and unto
the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,
and the angels on to say, “to an innumerable
company of angels².”

My brethren, in like manner find our-

² Heb. xii. 22.

selves invited to-day, by the concurrence of the Festival which we this day celebrate, of St. Michael and all Angels, with our weekly Feast in memory of His Resurrection who is the Lord of Angels and of men, to fix our contemplations on that world of brightness and glory where He sits enthroned, encircled by all the heavenly host, the Divine Uncreated Object of their adoration and praise.

The subject is one which, in the words of a sound and deeply-learned Bishop of our Church, "hath suffered between two extremes, the bold presumptuous curiosity of some, and the desperate or supine carelessness and unconcernedness of others about it; some flying too high, others sinking too low; some thinking and speaking too much, others too little of" the holy angels of God. "St. Paul," he observes, "takes notice of some in his time, whose curiosity in this inquiry led them to a religious worshipping of angels; whom therefore he condemns, as 'intruding into those things which they had not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds.'" And there have been ere now, as the same writer goes on to remind us, speculations concerning the Celestial Hierarchy ventured on "with so much assurance of the things above, as if" men had themselves "surveyed the heavenly mansions." "Wherefore others, out of a dread and abhorrence of such presumption, have run themselves into the contrary extreme, and can scarce endure any professed discourse of angels, or let it pass without the

the great and glorious God, if they sometimes of those most excellent between God and themselves, 'who of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, and is crushed before the moth.' By this we are ignorant of the great instruments of providence over us, and deprived of light receive from the knowledge of our distress and danger. Here-fore, O men of virtue, which God hath set before us to the example of His most holy angels, be not hid out of our sight: nor can we understand say that our daily petitions be done in earth, as it is in heaven,' angels³."

both the extremes mentioned, our say in the words of this eminent person xi. "The Existence of Angels and Spirits" (ed. Burton), vol. i. pp. 262, 263.

prelate, "will be to keep close to the holy Scriptures, and to admit only of such speculations concerning this matter, as are plainly taught us by divine revelation." And, on this as on other points, we are happily guided wisely and well by the authority of our faithful mother, the Church of England, carefully avoiding, as she does, each extreme; guarding us from the danger of a false humility and a perilous worshipping of angels, and at the same time leading us to a devout contemplation of their heavenly order, their holy worship and service, their faithful ministries of love and mercy.

Let us turn our thoughts, my brethren, for a few moments to that which the Scriptures have revealed to us concerning these blessed inhabitants of the courts of heaven.

Concerning their *numbers*, then,—we have heard the Apostle speaking of them as "an innumerable company of angels." And the prophet Daniel thus describes them in their countless myriads, as standing immediately before the throne and judgment-seat of the Divine glory. "I beheld," he says, "till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him⁴." And

⁴ Dan. vii. 9, 10.

in like manner the evangelic prophet and Apostle, the beloved disciple, in the visions of the heavenly temple, "I beheld," saith he, "and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands⁵." Such is the "innumerable company" which we are to represent to ourselves—though all human imagination must utterly fail—when heaven is opened to our view, and it is said, as in the vision which Micaiah declared before the kings of Israel and Judah, "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, *and all the host of heaven* standing by him on his right hand and on his left⁶." These are those "sons of God," of whom we read in the Book of Job as coming "to present themselves before the Lord⁷;" these are they whom the holy Psalmist calls upon to lead the general chorus of praise and thanksgiving, which was to swell with grateful accents from all orders of being, from every part of God's creation. "Bless the Lord, *ye his angels*, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul⁸." And so again, in another Psalm, we find the Psalmist exhorting "the celestial," and then

⁵ Rev. v. 11.

⁷ Job i. 6; ii. 1.

⁶ 1 Kings xxii. 19.

⁸ Ps. ciii. 20—22.

“ the terrestrial,” and finally “ the rational creatures,” of the race of man, “ to praise God.” “ Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens : praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels : praise ye him, all his hosts¹.”

And from these passages of Holy Writ we learn not only how innumerable are those armies of the sky, how perfect is their order, how glorious are their ranks, but also what is their high employment. They minister to the King of kings ; they stand before Him, ready to receive His commands and to execute His purposes, hearkening to the voice of His word. They are His ministers that do His pleasure ; swift as the lightnings which go forth at His bidding, and say unto Him, “ Here we are².” For “ of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire³.” They wait upon His word, and “ fly swiftly,” when He giveth them their commission⁴ ; they perform His commandments in such wise that this is the language in which Christ Himself, their Lord and ours, hath taught us to offer up the petition to our heavenly Father for perfect obedience to be rendered to Him in this lower world : “ Thy will be done on earth *as it is in heaven*.”

But mean while, as the Psalmist’s invitations addressed to these holy beings imply, their continual

¹ Ps. cxlviii. 1, 2. Compare the heading of the Psalm, E. V.

² Job xxxviii. 35.

³ Heb. i. 7. Comp. Ps. civ. 4.

⁴ Dan. ix. 21.

employment in the heavenly courts, their perpetual service and ministry, is the offering of praise and adoration. Thus the prophet Isaiah speaks, describing the vision with which he was favoured when he was called to his sacred office. "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. About it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory⁵." Every successive display of the Divine attributes, every unfolding scene in the dispensations of the Almighty towards His creatures, calls forth their holy admiration, and re-awakens their ascriptions of praise, their songs of holy gladness. It was thus they hailed the work of creation. For when the Almighty fixed "the foundations of the earth, and laid the corner-stone thereof," "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy⁶." They watched the advancing work, beholding reflected in it the glory of the Creator, and "again they said, Hallelujah;" "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory."

But there was yet another scene disclosed in the dispensations of God's grace and goodness, of His wisdom and power, which attracted to it most

⁵ Isa. vi. 1—3.

⁶ Job xxxviii. 4—7.

closely, and fixed most deeply and steadily upon it the reverential, inquiring gaze of those sons of light. St. Peter tells us concerning that which is the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, that of this "salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things," saith the holy Apostle, "*the angels* desire to look into⁷." Those heavenly intelligences had ministered, "at sundry times and in divers manners," to the gradual unfolding of this scheme of mercy. They were seen in vision by the wanderer Jacob, the heir of the promise, when he was an exile from his father's house, fleeing from the face of Esau, and had laid him down to sleep; "and he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it⁸." And then again, when, in obedience to the command given him by Him who revealed Himself there as "the God of Bethel,"

⁷ 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

⁸ Gen. xxviii. 12.

the patriarch was returning again, after many years, to his country and to his kindred, and "Jacob went on his way," as we have read in this morning's service, "the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim,"—the "two hosts, or camps¹." And when the children of Jacob, now multiplied into a nation, had been brought out of Egypt by their Almighty Deliverer, "according to their armies," and had pitched in the wilderness, and encamped before the holy mount, when "the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them," and "shined forth from mount Paran;" "he came with ten thousands of saints—holy ones;—from his right hand went a fiery law for them²." They "received the law," as St. Stephen declared, "by the disposition of angels." "It was ordained by angels," saith the Apostle St. Paul, "in the hand of a Mediator;" or, as the same Apostle elsewhere tells us, it was "the word spoken by angels³." And thus it was, accordingly, that He dwelt in the midst of His congregation of Israel; when He enshrined His glory in a chosen sanctuary; and "in Salem was his tabernacle and his dwelling-place in Sion." "The chariots of God are twenty thousand," saith the holy Psalmist, "even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place⁴." In His holy courts, as we have seen,

¹ Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.

² Deut. xxxiii. 2.

³ Acts vii. 53. Gal. iii. 19. Heb. ii. 2.

⁴ Ps. lxxviii. 17.

He manifested forth His glory, in vision to His saints ; revealed in the midst of His angelic ministers, and His train filling the temple. And when, for the sins of His people, He had brought an enemy into His sanctuary, and His temple lay waste, and His prophets were in the land of their captivity, even then angelic forms were seen by them standing by the waters of the rivers of Elam, and voices were heard like that which fell upon the ear of Daniel, between the banks of Ulai, saying, " Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision ⁵." And again, when the appointed years of chastisement seemed now near their close, and the prophet was presenting his supplication before the Lord his God for the holy mountain of his God, even whiles he was speaking in prayer, the angel Gabriel, whom he " had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched " him " about the time of the evening oblation," and revealed to him, in mystic numbers, how long it should be to the sealing up of all vision and prophecy in the coming of " Messiah the Prince ⁶."

And, when five hundred years and more had completed their course, there appeared in the temple, to the priest who was ministering there, the same angel Gabriel, sent thither from standing in the presence of God, to show the glad tidings of the birth of Christ's Forerunner ⁷; and again the same

⁵ Dan. viii. 16. Comp. chap. x., and chap. xii. 5—7.

⁶ Dan. ix. 20—27.

⁷ Luke i. 19.

heavenly messenger, the same "angel Gabriel was sent from God," to the lowly virgin at Nazareth, with the annunciation that He should be born of her who should be called the Son of the Highest, even He who was to "reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there" should "be no end ⁸." And when that promise had been fulfilled in Bethlehem of Judah, and to the shepherds in the field by night, the angel of the Lord appeared, proclaiming glad tidings of great joy unto all people, the unnumbered hosts of the sons of light were ready to break forth into their chorus of praise. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men ⁹."

Thus was that fulfilled, by angelic obedience and love, which was ordained where it is written, "when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him ¹." And it is needless to remind you how, in the days of His flesh, the Son of man received the reverent ministrations of the holy angels. When His conflict with Satan in the wilderness was over, "behold angels came and ministered unto him ²:" in the hour of His agony, "there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him ³;"

⁸ Luke i. 26—33.

⁹ Luke ii. 13, 14.

¹ Heb. i. 6.

² Matt. iv. 11.

³ Luke xxii. 43.

and if it had been according to *His* will, whose Divine will was His law, one prayer to His Father had brought to His aid “more than twelve legions” of the armies of heaven ⁴. Angels watched His sepulchre, and comforted His disciples, and the women who had come early to His tomb ⁵; and when He was received up, two of their number appeared in white apparel by the side of His Apostles, assuring them of the future return of their Master and Lord, in glory like that in which they had “seen him go into heaven ⁶.” And herein, assuredly, was given a pledge that, as angels had ministered to the Son of man, the Head of the mystic body which in Him was to be created anew out of the fallen race of man, so, for His sake, would they minister also to the members of that His body. And the Apostle accordingly asks, in language which designates this as though it were the very office and distinctive employment of the holy angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ⁷?” They watch, as the same Apostle hath taught us, the unfolding destinies of the Church of Christ, as that which was appointed to be the great scene for the display, even to them, of God’s Divine attributes, as well as of the manifestation of His love to man. “Unto me,”

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 53.

⁵ Matt. xxviii. Mark xvi. Luke xxiv. John xx.

⁶ Acts i. 10, 11.

⁷ Heb. i. 14.

saith the holy Apostle, " who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now *unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places* might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord ⁸." Where men have looked on, perhaps, with carelessness or contempt, with bitterness even or hatred, amid the Church's warfare, angels have been watching, through man's waywardness or wilfulness, his folly or his sin, the great purposes of God's manifold, inscrutable wisdom moving on in calm sublimity to their predestined end. They could tell us how, while saints on earth, like the faithful Daniel, did set their heart to understand and to chasten themselves before their God, some spirit unseen and mighty, like " the prince of the kingdom of Persia " was withstanding the angel of mercy and good, until " Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help " him ⁹. Some great contest of principles on earth, (as even men are wont to speak,)

⁸ Eph. iii. 8—11.

⁹ Compare Dan. x. 12, 13, (" one-and-twenty days,") with vv. 2, 3, (" three full weeks.") See also vv. 20, 21. chap. xi. 1, and xii. 1.

they knew was but the shadow of conflict among powers invisible, as when "there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels¹:" a struggle, perhaps, as of old, against the confession of the true deity of the Ever-blessed Son, the serpent putting forth all his power, with deadly rage, against the seed of the woman: and there was joy in heaven whensoever there was a victory of the cause "of truth and meekness and righteousness," and when the "right hand" of the Captain of our salvation taught him "terrible things²." They felt deep sympathy with the sufferings of Christ's members militant here in earth, even as though they had formed one body with them: when those suffered, these all suffered with them; when they were honoured, these all rejoiced with them. It was even thus that the beloved disciple "heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death³." All the triumphs of His saints who were "valiant for the truth upon the earth," all that angels witnessed below and aided in heaven, awoke

¹ Rev. xii. 7.² Ps. xlv. 4.³ Rev. xii. 10, 11.

, or by that which affects multitudes
“ I say unto you,” saith our Blessed
the joy of the shepherd when he
lost sheep, or the joy of her who,
and diligent search, hath found the
which she had lost, “ likewise ⁵,” in
even so,—so heartfelt and so full,
the presence of *the angels of God*
that repenteth ⁶.” Nay more, the
Lord of angels and of men hath
the authority of His own Divine lips,
even of the lambs of His flock, the
members, the little ones of His family
watched over by the guardian care of
blessed spirits that surround His
the words of our Blessed Lord seem
to us : “ Take heed that ye despise

⁵ ὡσαύτως

⁶ Luke xv. 10.

not *one* of these little ones ; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven⁷."

So gracious and tender is the care which is extended over us, my brethren, by that "God and Father of all;" so "wonderful" the "order" in which He, the everlasting God, hath "ordained and constituted the services of angels and men." And shall we not, then, earnestly desire, and humbly pray, that as His holy angels alway do Him service in heaven, so by His "appointment they may succour and defend us on earth⁸." We greatly need that succour and defence; doubtless, indeed, we need it, or it had not been thus promised and pledged to us. We need it, my brethren; for it is indeed no subject of curious inquiry to which the Church leads our thoughts to-day: it is an unquestionable, a fearful reality which constitutes this our need. For it is a state of conflict in which we find ourselves placed; and this present world is indeed the scene of our conflict, but the most mighty and awful combatants are unseen. "For we wrestle," saith the holy Apostle, "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

⁷ The expression "*their* angels," Bishop Bull observes, "plainly intimates, that all Christ's little ones who believe in Him, i. e. all humble and faithful persons, have their proper angels assigned to them, as their guardians and protectors."—Sermon xii. "The Office of the holy Angels towards the Faithful." vol. i. p. 301.

⁸ Collect for the Festival of St. Michael and all Angels.

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places⁹." If our eyes were but opened to the realities of our spiritual condition, we should see that it is indeed with us as with the prophet of old, when the king of Syria "sent horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about," to take him. "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?" How cheering, in such a view, to hear the words of strong assurance, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." How full of comfort and holy confidence to look with the eye of faith, and behold the mountain "full of horses and chariots of fire round about" us¹. For, verily, even thus "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them²." The angels of God meeting us on our way, are a pledge to us that "the angel of the Lord" Himself, the Captain of our salvation, is nigh at hand; Mahanaim shall bring us soon to Peniel; the true Israel shall have "power with God, and with men, and shall prevail;" like him, our father Israel, who "by his strength had power with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made

⁹ Eph. vi. 12.¹ 2 Kings vi. 14—17.² Ps. xxxiv. 7.

supplication unto him : he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us ; even the Lord God of hosts ; the Lord is his memorial ³."

Let us, especially, whose privilege it is, in the service of His sanctuary, to "wait upon" our "God continually ⁴," seek more and more to resemble, in our spirit and behaviour, in our whole character and conduct, those who stand before Him in His immediate presence in the courts of the Sanctuary above. Let us emulate their deep reverence, their humility and self-abasement, their lowly adoration, their fervent devotion, their unwearied delight in His worship, their holy joy in giving to Him the honour due unto His name. Let us seek to imitate them in their spirit of prompt obedience, their desire to be employed in their Maker's service, their love to all His creatures, their earnest care for men's salvation, their willing zeal in ministering to their welfare. So shall we be enabled to reflect, in our earthly measure, the likeness of "the sons of God," and be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord ⁵;" until at length the veil is drawn aside which hides Him from our view, and we be privileged to enter, through the merits of His only-begotten Son, our Lord, into the presence of the Uncreated Majesty, and in this our flesh, immortal and glorified, behold the face of our Father which is in heaven.

³ Hos. xii. 3—5.

⁴ Hos. xii. 6.

⁵ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

SERMON V.¹

COMMUNION, IN CHRIST, WITH HIS SAINTS.

DAN. iii. 25.

“He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

In directing our thoughts lately, as invited by the Church, to the contemplation of the angelic inhabitants of the courts of heaven, the worship and service which they render to the King of saints, and their ministries of love and mercy to His servants on earth, we were reminded how our communion with them forms part of that series of privileges which are bestowed upon us by virtue of our incorporation into Christ, in His mystical body, the Church. “Ye are come,” said the Apostle to his brethren of the Hebrews, “ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company

¹ Preached Oct. 6, 1850, being the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

of angels;”—but his description does not stop there; for he thus proceeds,—“to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel².”

Whatever we are to understand precisely and distinctly in those particulars of this enumeration which seem most to resemble each other, they evidently contain a special reference to the saints and servants of the Most High under the former dispensation. By “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,” the Apostle would designate, perhaps, the multitudes that first believed in Christ, of the families of the house of Israel: for it had been said by the Almighty of old, “Israel is my son, even my firstborn³;” and in the Revelation of St. John we read first of the sacred number of the servants of God which were sealed in their foreheads, even “an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of *the children of Israel* ;” the mention of whom is followed, immediately after, by that of the “great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues⁴.” And again of a sacred company described by the same mystic number it

² Heb. xii. 22—24.

³ Exod. iv. 22.

⁴ Rev. vii. 4—9.

is said, "these were redeemed from among men, being the *firstfruits* unto God and to the Lamb;" where again there follows the description of the preaching of the everlasting Gospel "unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people⁶." St. James, in like manner, writing to his brethren which believed, of the twelve tribes, speaks of the eternal Father as having of His own will begotten them again through the word of truth, that they "should be a kind of *firstfruits* of his creatures⁶." And this, apparently, in the same sense in which St. Paul, in discoursing with his Ephesian converts, concerning that "dispensation of the fulness of times," in which the Almighty Father would "gather together in one all things in Christ," speaks of himself and his brethren of the house of Israel as having had their inheritance in Him, bestowed upon them as a kind of firstfruits of the future Church; "that *we* should be to the praise of his glory," he says, "who *first* trusted in Christ, in whom," he goes on to say to his Gentile brethren, "*ye* also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation⁷."

And if we are to understand thus the Apostle's language concerning "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written to heaven," as referring to the first gathering of the

⁶ Rev. xiv. 1—6.

⁶ James i. 18.

⁷ Eph. i. 10—13.

remnant of Israel into the infant Church of Christ, there is still less doubt of his meaning, when he proceeds to speak of "the spirits of just men made perfect." For, at the close of the preceding chapter, he has made mention of those who, "having obtained a good report through faith," nevertheless "received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect^a." He is summing up here the review which he has been taking of the ranks of God's faithful saints and servants in old time, of the noble deeds which they had done, and the glorious promises which they had obtained through faith. He had begun from the earliest days of the world's history, the first records of the household of faith: even from righteous Abel, the first that was slain upon the earth; he speaks of Enoch in the antediluvian world, and of Noah, the second father of mankind, the inheritor, in a new world, "of the righteousness which is by faith;" he follows the sacred line of the patriarchs, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph; and tells of him by whose hand "the sons of Jacob and Joseph" were "mightily delivered" from the house of bondage. He sees them, through the power of faith, passing safely, by their armies, through the Red Sea, and entering triumphantly into the land of promise; the walls of the devoted Jericho falling before them,

^a Heb. xi. 39, 40.

a pledge of victory at every step ; while the faith of Rahab, and the deliverance which it wrought for her, with the privilege of admission even into the sacred line, of which in due time Christ should be born⁹, was an indication, as we may assuredly regard it, of the future communication of blessings to the Gentiles, made “ fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.”

But the Apostle could not follow further thus in detail from step to step the onward course of the champions of faith. He is compelled to break off at once, and sketch in few and broad lines a history, every stage of which was full of bright and glorious examples. And many a page of Holy Writ will recur to the mind of him who has studied well the sacred Volume, as he follows the rapid summary of the inspired Apostle, through the times of the Judges, the Kings, and the prophets of Israel, and onward through the times of the captivity to the trials and persecutions which marked the latter days of the Old Testament dispensation. “And what shall I more say ?” saith the Apostle. “For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae ; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets : who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the

⁹ Comp. Matt. i. 5.

sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens¹."

We cannot fail to recognize an allusion to those of whom we have read to-day, Daniel and his companions, the three children of the captivity of Judah, in the mention made by the Apostle of them who "stopped the mouths of lions," and "quenched the violence of fire." And the sufferings of others, their brethren, of "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," are pointed to in the description which follows, and which seems to swell, as the Apostle traces onward the sacred story and surveys the gathering ranks, into the full view, unfolding before him, of "the noble army of martyrs." "Women received their dead raised to life again," as in the days of Elijah and Elisha, "and others were tortured,"—like the faithful in the time of the Maccabees, Eleazar the aged scribe, and the mother with her seven sons²,—"were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment;" like Jeremiah in the prison and the dungeon, amidst the hatred and revilings of his countrymen; like him, too, if the tradition concerning him is true, or like Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, whom "they stoned with stones" when he testified against them,

¹ Heb. xi. 32—34.

² 2 Macc. vi. 19. 28; vii. 7, &c. See marginal references.

in the “very court of the house of the Lord³,” “they were stoned, they were sawn asunder,” as was Isaiah, we are told, by the command of the impious Manasseh,—“were tempted, were slain with the sword⁴; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth⁵.”

Such is that sacred company whom the Apostle represents to the view of his brethren of the Hebrew Church; the glorious company of those saints, who in the elder time had obtained a good report through faith, “the spirits of just men made perfect” now⁶, since He whom they looked for had come, and had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The Apostle points to them as to a vast encircling multitude, gathered round the arena on which the Christians were engaged in their arduous conflict,—a multitude of spectators, watching their course with holy interest, and encouraging them by their own high examples. “Wherefore,” saith the holy Apostle, “seeing we also are compassed about with *so great a cloud of witnesses*, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us⁷.”

³ 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21. Comp. Matt. xxi. 35; xxiii. 37.

⁴ Matt. xxi. 35. Acts vii. 58.

⁵ Heb. xi. 35—38.

⁶ Comp. chap. xi. 40, with chap. xii. 23.

⁷ Heb. xii. 1.

That all the saints and servants of the Most High, whose faithful deeds and patient sufferings are recorded in the undying page of His inspired word, were intended to be our ensamples, can be doubted by none who acknowledge that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope^a." And indeed, in confirmation of such assurance, it deserves to be well considered, how large a portion of Holy Writ consists of historical narrative; conveying irresistibly the impression that it was by lessons embodied in living history and example, not by mere abstract principles and rules, put forth as in some system of human philosophy, that our characters were to be moulded, and the path of duty marked out before us. But the holy Apostle's manner of speaking implies yet more than this. It would lead us to regard God's saints and servants of old time not merely as examples put on record, inciting us to the imitation of their graces and virtues, but rather as living members of one body with ourselves, elder brethren (as it were) of the same family, kinsmen and friends by a holy tie, sympathizing in our trials, rejoicing in our triumphs, animating and cheering us to successful effort, even as the combatant is cheered and animated by the voices which tell of sympathy in the breasts of a great multitude around him of his fellow-men. And if the thought of "an

^a Rom. xv. 4.

innumerable company of *angels*” compassing us on every side, and ready to aid us in our warfare, be indeed inspiriting to the servant of God, not less encouraging will be the remembrance of those who, in the same fallen, sinful nature which he himself bears about him, have been enabled, through His might, to endure to the end, and been “made more than conquerors through him that loved” them.

If, however, the Apostle could point the eye of *his* contemporaries and disciples, in the first age of the Gospel, to “so great a cloud of witnesses,” as he bade them look up, and by faith behold gathered round them, how greatly is the force of his words augmented, what a depth of meaning, what an emphatic tone have they gained, in the long course of ages, the years of many generations, which have followed one another since those first days of the Church of Christ upon earth! Since the time when the Apostle thus spake to his brethren of the seed of Abraham, a period equal in extent to that which had then elapsed from the days of their father Abraham, the father of the faithful, has passed over the Christian Church; and if it has been with her, as with the Church of Israel in old time,—if there have been times, with her, of degeneracy and corruption, darkness overspreading the earth and intercepting the light of heaven,—still there has not been wanting a succession of bright luminaries in her firmament, witnesses to the power

of Christian faith and love, bearing testimony the more impressive by reason of the gathering shadows, the dimness or the deep obscurity amid which they shone.

And—what is especially to be observed—there is an indissoluble unity running throughout ; it is still one Church, one body, one lengthened train preceding and following the King of saints : the faithful of the elder days not permitted to be made perfect without us, the favoured children of the new kingdom ; we in our turn taught to look back to them as our fathers in the faith, pre-ordained inheritors, in due time, of the hopes and promises which they so eagerly embraced⁹. It is even as when, in the solemn triumphal procession from the mount of Olives to the city of Sion's King, " they that went before and they that followed " swelled with their full chorus but one sacred strain of praise, " Hosanna to the Son of David : Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ; " " Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord : Hosanna in the highest¹." And still further it may be remarked, as indicating yet more clearly the essential unity throughout, that the triumphs of faith under the elder dispensation seem to have been so ordained as to approach more nearly, as the days of the Messiah drew near, to that which

⁹ Heb. xi. 13. Comp. Gen. xlix. 18, &c.

¹ Matt. xxi. 9. Mark xi. 9, 10.

was to be the distinctive character and complexion of His kingdom. It will have been observed how, as we follow on the catalogue of saints of the elder time whom the Apostle enumerates, the *exploits* of faith give place to its *sufferings*, its active energies to its powers of passive endurance, its victories on the fields of battle to its scenes of agony and martyrdom. For, indeed, in the words of an eloquent bishop of our Church, "as the world grew more enlightened by faith, so it grew more dark with mourning and sorrows. God sometimes sent a light of fire," he goes on to say, "and a pillar of a cloud, and the brightness of an angel, and the lustre of a star, and the sacrament"—the sign—"of a rainbow to guide His people through their portion of sorrows, and to lead them through troubles to rest: but as the Sun of Righteousness approached towards the chambers of the east, and sent the harbingers of light peeping through the curtains of the night, and leading on the day of faith and brightest revelation; so God sent degrees of trouble upon wise and good men, that now in the same degree in the which the world lives by faith, and not by sense, in the same degree they might be able to live in virtue, even while she lived in trouble." "The godly," he observes, "generally were prosperous; and a good cause seldom had an ill end, . . . till the law had spent a great part of its time, and it descended towards its declension and

period. But, that the great Prince of sufferings might not appear upon his stage of tragedies without some forerunners of sorrow, God was pleased to choose out some good men, and honour them, by making them to become little images of suffering. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah, were martyrs of the law ; but these were single deaths : Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were thrown into a burning furnace, and Daniel into a den of lions but these were but little arrests of the prosperity of the godly." But "as the time drew nearer that Christ should be manifest, so the sufferings grew bigger and more numerous ; and Antiochus raised up a sharp persecution in the time of the Maccabees, in which many passed through the red sea of blood into the bosom of Abraham ; and then Christ came."—And "Christ was to do His great work by sufferings, and by sufferings was to enter into blessedness ; and by His passion He was made Prince of the Catholic Church ; and as our Head was, so must the members be." And "He died not by a single or a sudden death, but He was 'the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world ;' for He was massacred in Abel, saith St. Paulinus ; He was offered up in Isaac, persecuted in Jacob, betrayed in Joseph, cast into the dungeon with Jeremiah ; for all these were types of Christ suffering. And then His passion continued even after His resurrection. For it is He that suffers in all His members ; it is He that

‘endures the contradiction of all sinners ;’ it is He that is ‘the Lord of life, and is crucified again, and put to open shame’ in all the sufferings of His servants, and sins of rebels, and defiances of apostates and renegadoes, and violence of tyrants, and injustice of usurpers, and the persecutions of His Church ².’’

And as we have seen how these were foreshadowings of Christ’s sufferings, in His dispensations towards His elder Church as His own coming drew near, so perhaps we may discover something typical of this mysterious fellowship of suffering between Christ and His members, in that vision at which, in Babylon of old, “Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt ; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” His words, perhaps, expressed only an undefined idea within him of some superhuman being, such as the language of the East in patriarchal times intended, when it spoke of “the sons of God” who stood before the presence of the Most High : he may have thought only of some created intelligence, when he

² Bishop Jeremy Taylor’s Sermon, on “The Faith and Patience of the Saints ; or, the Righteous Cause oppressed.” —Works, vol. v. pp. 524—528.

said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent *his angel*, and delivered his servants that trusted in him." But we, my brethren, may surely trace here an undoubted sign and pledge that, even though it were a created angel that appeared amidst the flames, walking with the three children, there was with them in very deed the Uncreated power and presence of Him of whom it is written, in the prophetic vision of His Divine sympathy with the sufferings of His Church, and His bitter conflict in the cause of His chosen, "He said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction *he* was afflicted, and *the angel of his presence* saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old ³."

It cannot, indeed, be too deeply impressed upon our minds, whether by the types and shadows of the Old Testament, or in the full revelation of the New, whether by the visions of the prophets, or by the discourses of the Apostles, or by the suffering lives and martyr deaths of both, that the Divine and living fellowship which binds us together with each and with all, is vouchsafed to us in Him, and through Him, that "Son of God" through whom alone we are privileged to have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father; even in Him, "who, being in the

³ Isa. lxiii. 8, 9.

form of God, . . . took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." That Divine image of suffering and glory is reflected every where in the fainter shadows of His saints on earth. His Divine form stands ever in the midst of them, and thither our eyes are devoutly turned by every action of theirs ; their reverential gaze being ever intently fixed on Him, their voices or their silence deeply speaking His praise. Thus the "great cloud of witnesses" by whom "we are compassed about," concentrates our view the more stedfastly on Him who is the Captain of their salvation and of ours ; "looking unto Jesus," the Apostle proceeds—"looking off"—for that is the full meaning of the word,—off every inferior object, "unto Jesus the author,"—or "beginner⁴,"—"and finisher of our faith ; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God⁵."

It is by virtue of our communion and fellowship with Him that we have communion and fellowship with all His saints, both those who are "living in the Church of Christ," and those who are "departed out of this life, and admitted to the presence of God." In the words of an eminent and highly

⁴ Margin.

⁵ Heb. xii. 2.

esteemed expositor of the Creed, "The mystical union between Christ and his Church, the spiritual conjunction of the members to the Head, is the true foundation of that communion which one member hath with another ; all the members living and increasing by the same influence which they receive from Him." "Nor is this union separated by the death of any ; but as Christ in whom they live is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, so have they fellowship with all the saints which from the death of Abel have ever departed in the true faith and fear of God, and now enjoy the presence of the Father, and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

"This communion of the saints in heaven and earth, upon the mystical union of Christ their Head, being fundamental and internal, what acts or external operations it produceth," says the same sound and learned prelate, "is not so certain. That we communicate with them in hope of that happiness which they actually enjoy, is evident ; that we have the Spirit of God given us as an earnest, and so a part of their felicity, is certain. But what they do in heaven in relation to us on earth particularly considered, or what we ought to perform in reference to them in heaven, beside a reverential respect and study of imitation, is not revealed unto us in the Scriptures, nor can be concluded by necessary deduction from any principles of Christianity. They which first found this part of the Article [of the

Communion of Saints] in the Creed, and delivered their exposition unto us, have made no greater enlargement of this communion as to the saints in heaven, than the society (the fellowship) of hope, esteem, and imitation on our side, of desires and supplications on their side; and what is now taught by the Church of Rome is, as unwarrantable, so a novitious interpretation ⁶."

The Church of England, carefully following herein the teaching and practice of the primitive Church, has rejected "the Romish doctrine concerning an invocation of saints" as "a thing grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God⁷." But in accordance with the spirit of that holy Word, and the practice of the first and purest ages, while she dares not invoke the saints, or bow down and worship before their images, she reverently and gratefully cherishes their memories; and, in the due order of her solemn Communion Office, she teaches us continually to bless God's holy Name for all His servants departed this life in His faith and fear, beseeching Him to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that, with them, we may be partakers of His heavenly kingdom. "In the judgment of our Church," as has been well observed by a pious and excellent bishop, "next to the habitual recollection of our baptismal covenant,

⁶ Bishop Pearson, Exposition of the Creed, Art. "The Communion of Saints."

⁷ Article XXII.

the devout participation of the holy eucharist, the affectionate study of the sacred volume, and that which necessarily pervades each, and all of them, constant and fervent prayer, we are called to the contemplation of the Christian cloud of witnesses, as, after those paramount means of grace, the holiest and happiest occupation in which we can be engaged ; the surest method of obtaining the height of virtue, and the depth of peace here ; and the most effectual preparative for that perfection of bliss, which awaits the triumphant Church in the regions of eternity⁸."

May we, my brethren, continuing "stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers⁹," "have fellowship with" them, whose fellowship truly was "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ¹." Walking "in the light as he is in the light," approving ourselves in His sight, and before men, as "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke²," may we be enabled to praise and glorify His name, to "magnify and exalt him above all for ever." In whatever manner it may please Him to try our faith and steadfastness, our obedience, or our patience ; whether the trial come in the ordinary course of our daily life, in the unsuspected circumstances of our earthly calling, in the society into which we are thrown, in the maxims of the world around us, in

⁸ Bishop Jebb, on the Peculiar Character of the Church of England. (Appendix to Sermons, pp. 392, 393).

⁹ Acts ii. 42. ¹ 1 John i. 3. ² 1 John i. 7. Phil. ii. 15.

the temptation to do as others do, to "fall down and worship the golden image which" worldly power or human opinion may have "set up," or whether it come with the terrors of open persecution, and the flames of a "burning fiery furnace," may "the trial of our faith," tried though it be with fire, "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ³." Having sought His gracious presence and protection in all our temptations here, in this scene of our earthly probation, may He grant to us in that day to "walk with" Him "in white⁴," in that brighter world, the scene of His triumph, and of our blessedness above! May He, of His infinite mercy, acknowledge us then as the "blessed children of" His Father, and bid us "inherit the kingdom prepared for" us "from the foundation of the world⁵!"

³ 1 Pet. i. 7.⁴ Rev. iii. 4.⁵ Matt. xxv. 34.

SERMON VI.¹

THE DANGERS WHICH THREATEN OUR SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE.

JOEL ii. 3.

“The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness ; yea, and nothing shall escape them.”

THE chapter before us contains a vivid and striking description of a visitation which the Almighty Ruler of Israel, in His righteous judgment, was about to bring upon His land and His people. That which the prophet Joel describes would seem at first sight to be the invasion of a hostile army, like those of the Assyrian or the Babylonian, coming up with its countless legions to fill the breadth of the land. On examining, however, more minutely the language of the prophecy in its several parts, it would appear that it is not of an army of *men* that the prophet unfolds the vision, but of one not the less

¹ Preached Oct. 13, 1850, being the twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

formidable or destructive, though it wielded not the sword or the spear under the command of an earthly general, but held on its course under His immediate commission and control, who has all the powers of nature, all the creatures which He hath made,—the great and the small alike,—ready, as His ministers and agents, to perform His pleasure, the Lord of hosts Himself mustering the host of the battle.

The opening words of the prophet's mission, in the preceding chapter, reveal the nature of that visitation which was coming upon the heritage of Israel. "The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten²." And he proceeds to shadow forth the march of the destroyer under the imagery of an invading army: "For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste, and

² Joel i. 1—4.

barked my fig-tree : he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away ; the branches thereof are made white ³." We are reminded, in this description, of that which, in "the words of Agur," preserved in the Book of Proverbs, is said of one of those four things which are there spoken of as being "little upon the earth," and yet withal "exceeding wise." "The locusts," he says, "have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands : " and the description is remarkably verified in the accounts given us by the inhabitants of Eastern countries of the movements of a locust army invading a land. We may be reminded, too, by the prophet's language of what we read, in the inspired record of the plagues inflicted upon Egypt, of the word spoken to Pharaoh, "Behold, to-morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast : and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth : and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field : and they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians ; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day ⁴." And accordingly we are told, when on the morrow the locusts came up, "they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the

³ Joel i. 6, 7.

⁴ Exod. x. 4—6.

land was darkened ; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left ; and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt ⁵.”

With these descriptions in mind, we shall find no difficulty in understanding the language of the prophet's vision, when he saw overhanging the land “a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains,”—overspreading it in its whole surface at once, like the dawn in Eastern climes ;—“a great people, and a strong ; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations ⁶.” Their onward march was to be tracked by devastation ; every living thing, of herb or grass or tree, stripped and laid waste. “A fire goeth before them, and behind them a flame burneth : the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness ; yea, and nothing shall escape them ⁷.” In the description which follows we find a close resemblance to that which is given of the symbolical locust army in the visions of the Revelation. “The appearance of them,” saith the prophet, continuing his description of the army of the destroyer, “is as the appearance of horses ; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of

⁵ Exod. x. 15.

⁶ Joel ii. 2.

⁷ Joel ii. 3.

chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array⁸." In the Apocalyptic vision it is said, "the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle;" "and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle⁹." But still more explicitly, in the latter part of the chapter before us, it is declared what that army was whose invasion had been foretold: "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, *my great army which I sent among you*¹."

Such was the visitation, so fearful and destructive, which was revealed to the prophet as impending over the land, and which is described in his vivid imagery. For this it was that he bade them "blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in" God's "holy mountain," and call His people to humiliation and repentance, if thereby they might avert the coming calamity. But as we find, in the latter part of the chapter, the Spirit of prophecy passing on from promises of temporal abundance, to be granted on the repentance of Israel, to the richer blessings of the Gospel dispensation, so will the description which the prophet has given of the desolating ravages of the spoiler carry our thoughts to a more afflictive visitation than any which can affect

⁸ Joel ii. 4, 5.

⁹ Rev. ix. 7. 9.

¹ Joel ii. 25.

the life of the body, or destroy the fruits of the earth. We cannot doubt that he is speaking of spiritual blessings when, in the following chapter, he says, "And it shall come to pass in that day"—the latter day of the Gospel dispensation—"that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim²." And, as another prophet describes under the imagery of famine a worse infliction than a scarcity of the food which sustains the body, so may we profitably contemplate, in connexion with the prophecy before us, what it is to think of, and how it comes to pass, when that which was once, "as the garden of Eden" in spiritual beauty and richness, becomes "a desolate wilderness," and nothing can escape the destroyer. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God," is His awful message by the hand of Amos, "that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst³." And we are the rather invited to such considerations, inasmuch as

² Joel iii. 18.

³ Amos viii. 11—13.

the vision of the locusts in the Book of the Revelation, it can scarcely be doubted, whatever particular interpretation of its symbols be adopted, delineates some fearful obscuration of the light in the spiritual heavens, an incursion of deadly error, full of suffering and mischief and woe to the spirits of men. It was a star fallen from heaven that ushered in the calamity which St. John describes ; and it was from the bottomless pit that the smoke arose, "as the smoke of a great furnace," whereby "the sun and the air were darkened;" and "there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth : and unto them was given power. . . . And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, nor any tree ; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon,"—"a destroyer⁴." We have evidently here—and this is sufficient for our present purpose—under imagery resembling that of the prophet in the chapter before us, a description of spiritual danger and desolation which may well lead us onward from the thought of those calamities which lay waste an earthly scene of fertility and beauty, to those which may turn the excellency and glory of our spiritual heritage into the dreary barrenness of a desert.

⁴ Rev. ix. 1—4. 11.

Let us briefly, my brethren, recount the privileges and blessings of our Christian possession, as they have lately come before us successively in review, that so we may the more plainly and fully discover wherein our danger lies.

Our first great privilege, then, may be said to consist in this,—that, like Israel of old, our portion hath been *given* to us, of God's grace and goodness. We have *inherited*, through a line of spiritual ancestry derived from Christ's Apostles and their disciples, that which we are permitted so richly to enjoy. It has not been left to the wisdom of our own choice; or we had too surely chosen as ill for ourselves as did the patriarch Lot, when he "lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, when thou comest unto Zoar:" and he "chose him all the plain of Jordan⁵." We should have been in danger, too certainly, of being captivated by that which was attractive to sense, which pleased the fancy, or commended itself to our imperfect judgment, our ill-instructed reason, in matters of religion; not knowing where danger overhung the landscape which looked so fair and lovely, or how fearful a gulph yawned beneath the smooth and smiling surface; how the storm of fire and brimstone was ere long

⁵ Gen. xiii. 10, 11.

to be poured down upon it in wrath and vengeance, and "the whole land thereof" to be "brimstone, and salt, and burning⁶." It is our privilege, in matters of faith and rules of obedience, that to us hath been fulfilled that which the Psalmist spake in the name of *his* people Israel, concerning the gift and blessing of the Most High, "HE shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved⁷."

And what was "the excellency of Jacob," but the dwelling among them of their Almighty Guardian and Guide? "The excellency of" their "strength, and the desire of" their "eyes," was none other than this, even the "sanctuary" of their God planted in the midst of them⁸. This was their distinguishing glory, and their special boast; even as the prophet asks concerning them. "What shall then one answer the messengers of the nation?" and the answer which he records is this, "That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it,"—shall "betake themselves unto it⁹." And this accordingly was the inspiring theme of the sacred lays of musicians and psalmists. They spake of "his foundation"—the foundation which He had laid—"in the holy mountains," and of the "glorious

⁶ Deut. xxix. 23.—"Like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath."

⁷ Ps. xlvii. 4.

⁸ Ezek. xxiv. 21.

⁹ Isa. xiv. 32. Compare marginal rendering.

things ” which were “spoken of her,” that “city of God¹ ;” “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,” “on the sides of the north, the city of the great King².” And what was all this, my brethren, but the shadowing out, to prophets and psalmists, to kings and righteous men of old, of that of which the final promise was given by the Everlasting Word of Jehovah,—Himself incarnate in our nature, and dwelling in the tabernacle of His flesh amongst us,—when He said, “Upon this rock I will build my Church.” And “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ;” and “the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all ;” and “we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise³.” This is our birthright, and this our inheritance, and this our prerogative as the children of the promise ; this is that freedom wherewith we were “freeborn ” to the privileges of a “citizenship in heaven⁴ :”—the being “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ;” “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light⁵ ;” admitted to the privileges of brethren with those eldest born of the sons of light, which kept their first estate, nor left their own habitation ; brought near “to an innumerable company of angels,” as well as “to the

¹ Ps. lxxxvii. 1. 3.

² Ps. xlviii. 2.

³ Gal. iv. 26. 28.

⁴ Phil. iii. 20.

⁵ Eph. ii. 19. Col. i. 12.

general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven," and "to the spirits of just men made perfect;" permitted to enjoy the blessedness of a yet higher communion and fellowship than this, even of that by virtue of which we have this communion with saints and angels, "having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ⁶;" brought near even "unto God the Judge of all," "and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant," through the atoning power and virtue of "the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel,"—the blood of that immaculate Lamb which was slain from the foundation of the world. All this, my brethren, in its inexhaustible fulness of blessing, we have been taught to sum up, in few words, yet full of meaning, and intelligible even to our childish perceptions, making known to us the privilege and the mystery of that incorporation into Christ, "wherein I was made,"—as each one of us hath been taught to acknowledge, in accents of heartfelt thankfulness to a heavenly Father's love,—"wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

And in declaring thus the privileges of which we were made partakers when we were planted in our Christian heritage, the Church assuredly did but reflect the very language in which Christ's Apos-

⁶ 1 John i. 3.

bles spake to their disciples and converts, of that one body of Christ into which they had all by one Spirit been baptized, and of the love wherewith the Father had loved them, that they "should be called the sons of God," made "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ'." They freely dwelt, in the converse they held with their brethren in Christ, on the riches of His bounty whose "divine power" had "given unto" them "all things that pertain unto life and godliness⁷." In the new creation of His spiritual "Eden, the garden of God," they who had faithfully learned of them, as they had learnt of Christ, could tell of a spring of living waters, "a fountain of gardens, and streams from Lebanon⁸;" "a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness¹," where the defilement of the first Adam might be washed away, and from whence "a pure river of water of life" "went forth," as "out of Eden," to water the garden, sending forth its salutary streams to every quarter². In "one baptism for the remission of sins," the baptism into Christ, they saw a pledge of continual forgiveness for daily trespasses and shortcomings, vouchsafed to the penitent Christian, in answer to his daily prayer, by virtue of his union with Christ; even as the waters from the rock followed the tribes of Israel in the wilderness, "and that rock was Christ³." In the provisions

⁷ 1 Cor. xii. 13. 1 John iii. 1. Rom. viii. 17, &c.

⁸ 2 Pet. i. 3.

⁹ Cant. iv. 15.

¹ Zech. xiii. 1.

² Rev. xxii. 1. Gen. ii. 10.

³ 1 Cor. x. 4.

of His Gospel and His Church they beheld, as it were, growing in its greenness and vigour, "on either side of the river," "the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations⁴." They had the doctrine of Christ's holy Apostles, the faith which they had taught to the Churches planted by them on every side, —the articles of the Christian faith, the everliving memorials of the Apostles' inspired teaching, revealing in due season in their holy course, as the sacred months revolve, the varied beauty and richness of Divine Truth; as they taught it with their lips, and exemplified it in their lives and deaths, with all its heavenly produce, the fruits of the Spirit, "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God⁵." And this we have in the Apostolic Creed, faithfully guarded through manifold assaults, and preserved to us, under the protecting care of God's Almighty power and providence, from age to age. And having this still preserved to us in all its integrity, even "the faith once delivered to the saints," containing in it all the hidden riches of "the mystery of God, even the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge⁶;" duly taught, as we have been, the knowledge of the Father who created, the Son who hath redeemed,

⁴ Rev. xxii. 2. Comp. Ezek. xlvii. 12.

⁵ Phil. i. 11.

⁶ Col. ii. 2, 3.

the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth us ; instructed in all His will, as made known to us in His holy commandments, and fully expounded in the pages of His inspired Word ; privileged to call upon Him “ by diligent prayer,” as our Father in heaven, in the hallowed words which His Blessed Son hath taught us, and with His Spirit promised to us to make intercession in our behalf ; with “ the means of grace ” vouchsafed to us in His Church and household, sustaining us with “ the hope of glory,”—what, my brethren, can we need more for the edification of our spirits, and our growing up into all holiness ? Surely when we survey our spiritual portion, the lot of our Christian inheritance, we must acknowledge that, “ the land is as the garden of Eden before ” us ; we may well say, with the Psalmist, “ The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage ’.”

In proportion, however, to the inestimable value of that of which we have been thus made partakers, should be our anxiety and diligent care that we lose it not. And in these latter days we require, perhaps, in a more than ordinary degree, to be reminded *where* our peril lies, and that it is indeed a peril not to be trifled with. For the principle of faith in the Christian’s heart and mind is a delicate thing, as well as precious ; and our spiritual adversary knows too well how to assault or undermine it. It is with us, as it was with our first parents.

’ Ps. xvi. 6.

There is "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," in the midst of the garden; and to our human nature, under the influence of the tempter, the tree will seem "good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise⁸." In the times in which our lot is cast, there is everywhere discernible a disposition, in a somewhat different sense from that in which the Apostle gave the exhortation, to "prove all things;" there is a disposition to put every thing, so to speak, upon its trial, and this (in too many cases, it is to be feared) without a due sense accompanying it of the danger, lest the result be not that we "hold fast that which is good⁹." The barriers which were wont to separate from each other different communities and nations, different creeds and opinions, different modes of thought and action, are now, through the combined operation of a variety of causes, broken down and taken away; and every thing that the active intellect of a stirring age originates in any quarter, or in any form, is made accessible to all; and it would seem as if the days were fully come of which it is written, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased¹." And the palpable advantages which such a state of things seems in many ways to hold out to the hopes and interests of men, may easily conceal from us, if we are not wakefully on our guard, the dangers which under such circumstances threaten our main-

⁸ GEN. iii. 6.⁹ 1. THESS. v. 21.¹ DAN. xii. 4.

tenance of TRUTH ; dangers which beset us all, but especially the young and inexperienced, who need therefore to be the more tenderly and affectionately warned, and thereby, through God's grace, protected against them.

For indeed it is but too easy, before we are in any degree aware of the effect upon ourselves of what we are doing, to let in the point of the wedge which may in the end cleave asunder the very strength and substance of our faith : we may have indulged our curiosity in hearing what this or that set of opinions, or form of belief, has to say for itself, and what it has to urge against our own ; we may have ventured, in regard to this point or that,—which perhaps may have seemed but “a little one,”—to parley with temptation, to tamper with our own sacred convictions, or to let in a doubt on some point where it ought at once to have been silenced ; we may have listened too favourably to a voice which whispered, though it were but a faint suggestion, “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden²?” But the mischief meanwhile may have been done ; the simplicity of faith, in its unsuspecting confidence, its happy childlike dependence of spirit, may have been lost for ever ; the eyes may have been opened to a new range of thought, to a new view of things, a new world around it ; but, like the eyes of our first parents, opened at the same time only to a con-

² Gen. iii. 1.

sciousness of shame and nakedness, of weakness and helplessness ;—all that was once invested with a sense of God's presence and protection, throwing its Divine mantle over every thing about us, now laid bare, made naked and desolate ; what seemed like " the morning spread upon the mountains " turned suddenly into " a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness ;" all that once cheered the eye and gladdened the heart swept utterly away, before the face of the spirit (as it may have called itself) of free inquiry and enlightened investigation ; the land which was " as the garden of Eden before them," left " behind them " as " a desolate wilderness ; yea, and nothing shall escape them." For it may appear, perhaps, or it may be indeed, in the first instance, some doctrine of apparently secondary importance that is called in question, some mere outwork of the Catholic faith that has been assaulted and abandoned : but as the holy Apostle declared with a warning voice concerning erroneous doctrines in his time, " their word will eat as doth a canker³ ;" one error will lead on to another ; the spirit of scepticism will make way for open and avowed unbelief, teachers of falsehood and blasphemy, even " denying the Lord that bought them ;" disputing the inspiration and authority of God's revealed word, or denying that Jesus is the Christ, come in the flesh ; even " denying the Father and the Son⁴," or blotting out

³ 2 Tim. ii. 17.

⁴ 2 Pet. ii. 1. 1 John ii. 22.

from the visible creation the footsteps of an Almighty Creator.

It would seem to be reserved for the last days of the Church of Christ upon earth, so far as the veil is rolled back from the yet undeveloped future in the visions of Sacred Prophecy, to witness a great and final conflict between the powers of Christ and of Antichrist, of Christian faith and of infidel apostacy. For that ancient enemy of man, "that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan," we are told, "shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, . . . to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" —even "to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty⁵." And is there not, my brethren, in the signs of the times, to those who will set themselves thoughtfully to discern them, enough to put us anxiously on our guard, as faithful servants, looking and waiting for Him, who in His Gospel hath recorded for our warning His own emphatic question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth⁶?" "Behold, I come as a thief."—This is His message by His beloved disciple, placed significantly in the very midst of the description of the fearful mustering of the host for the great and final battle.—"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they

⁵ Rev. xx. 2, 7, 8; xvi. 14.

⁶ Luke xviii. 8.

see his shame⁷." Infidelity is even now ready to put itself daringly forth in various forms of error, adapted to different ranks and orders of men, to the learned and the ignorant alike, "high and low, rich and poor, one with another⁸." And the emissaries of Rome meanwhile are ready on their part, indulging at once the spirit of progress and the love of novelty, with the semblance withal of antiquity, and that which is to satisfy the craving for absolute, universal certainty in matters of religion. They will be endeavouring craftily to persuade men that the middle way of the Church of England, the old way which our fathers in the faith have trodden in purity and peace, is a delusion and a dream; that there is no possible intermediate course between the unbridled licence of individual opinion, a proud self-sufficient rationalism on the one hand, or on the other hand entire unquestioning submission to the authority of an infallible Church, and of a supreme judge of all controversies, a Vicar of Christ upon earth. They will be found stamping with that usurped authority, falsely claiming to be Divine, not only the twelve new articles which Papal Supremacy in the sixteenth century dared to add to those of the ancient Creed, but also whatever so-called "developments" the spirit of a presumptuous or a profane theology may think fit to engraft on "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," and preserved and handed down in the Creeds and

⁷ Rev. xvi. 15. Comp. vv. 14 and 16.

⁸ See Note C.

the subtlety of the well-practised converts, the proselyting agents and converts, of Rome.

Thus, amidst whatever dangers and enemies from either side, on the one or the other side, on the left, we make this our care and our prayer, to remember how we have received and been taught, "the form of sound words which the apostolic Church hath taught us, "in which is Christ Jesus," let us remember that the end of all knowledge is obedience, and the fruits of faith are good works, and that the chief of all Christian privilege is Christ. Let us remember, too, that judgments which the prophet foresaw in his vision as God's heritage of old, are appointed as a recompensation for privileges neglected or means of grace despised. This was the parable which another prophet,

Rev. iii. 3. 2 Tim. i. 13.

following not long after the time of Joel, was commissioned to put forth as "a song of" his "beloved touching his vineyard." "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. . . . What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes¹⁰?"

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life¹." There must in some way be a trial of the steadfastness of our faith, of our diligence in prayer, of our love to God, as proved by the keeping of His commandments. But "He is faithful that promised²;" "and this is the promise that he hath promised us," if we be but faithful to Him, "even eternal life³." He hath said, who is the Truth and cannot lie, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God⁴."

¹⁰ Isa. v. 1, 2. 4.¹ Jude 20, 21.² Heb. x. 23.³ 1 John ii. 25.⁴ Rev. ii. 7.

NOTES.

Note A, p. 19.

UPON this passage we may quote the earnest and emphatic comment of Vincentius Lirinensis.

"But what is the drift of the Apostle in saying, 'Though we?' why not as well, 'Though I?' Why, this is much more full and comprehensive: and, as if he should have said, 'Though Peter, though Andrew, though John, though the whole college of Apostles 'should preach any other Gospel, let them be accursed.' A very tremendous anathema! Wherein he neither spares himself nor his fellow-Apostles, the better to establish us in the primitive faith. And as if this had been too little, he adds, 'Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.' For fear a curse upon man only should prove an insufficient sanction for the security of the faith once delivered, he rises higher, and pronounces the like anathema against the angelic order also, 'Though we or an angel (says he) from heaven,' &c. Not that the Apostle thought it possible for those holy and heavenly spirits to sin now any more; but his meaning is, that, if that should happen which never can happen, whoever he is that attempts any alterations in the original faith, 'let him be accursed.'"

. . . . "The Apostle pursues it as a matter of such grand importance, that he inculcates it over and over again with all the force of repeated asseverations, 'As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.' Gal. i. 9. 'Tis not here said, 'If any man preach any other gospel unto you than

that ye have received, let him be received, let him be blessed, applauded, and entertained amongst you ;' but ' let him be anathema,' that is, separated, turned out, and cut off from the communion of the Church ; for fear the damnable contagion of one sheep should spread itself through the flock of Christ, and infect the faithful. But 'twill be objected, perhaps, that this canon respected the Galatians only, and does not extend itself to us in these times. But for the same reason those other rules in the conclusion of this epistle may be said to respect the Galatians only, namely such as these, ' If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit, let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.' Gal. v. 25, 26. But now if it be absurd to understand these texts with restriction, and if they are equally binding to all mankind, then is it evident, that as these rules about Christian morality, so those provisions made for the Christian faith are both alike obligatory and comprehensive."

Vincentius proceeds in the next chapter,—

"If mutual provocations and envyings will never be lawful to any Christians at any time, so will it always be full as unlawful to admit of any doctrine as an article of faith, but what has universally been held as such in the Catholic Church. . . . To preach therefore to Christian Catholics any other doctrine than what they have received, never was, never is, and never will be lawful. And to anathematize the setters forth of strange articles, ever was, ever is, and ever will be a duty."—Commonitory, chap. 12—14, as translated in Reeve's *Apologies*, &c., vol. ii. pp. 254—257 (ed. 1717).

The translator observes in a note, "This indeed is a great truth ; and had been an excellent motto, worthy to have been inscribed in letters of gold, and placed before the Trent Council for the rule of their proceedings, who made an oath not to receive or expound Scripture but according to the uniform consent of the ancient Fathers. And yet . . . Bellarmine, in direct opposition to the Catholic maxim before us, without mincing the matter shall plainly declare, that the Church of latter time hath power, not only to declare and explain, but even to constitute and command what shall belong to the Faith."—Bellarm. *Tract. de potest.*

Sum. Pontif. If then the latter Church, that is, the Church of Rome, hath power to constitute and command more doctrines to be believed as necessary to salvation than were believed by the primitive Church, then has it power to make new creeds every day, and that to be a necessary article now, which fifteen hundred years ago and upwards was never dreamed of. And if so, methinks, they might spare their compliments upon the Fathers, and our author in particular, who writes this whole book only to prove, that antiquity, universality, and consent, is the rule we ought to go by in the interpretation of Scripture, which he affirms to be the perfect canon of faith and manners, against the express doctrine of that Church. The maxim here laid down is a conclusion drawn from several texts of Scripture, the chief of which, and what he has thought fit to explain and inculcate over and over again, is this, 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you, *καρ' ε*, besides what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.' . . . The teachers against whom St. Paul pronounces this anathema are such as joined the observation of the law, as necessary, to the faith of the Gospel. And by this they taught that what the Apostle preached as necessary to salvation, was not sufficient without their additions; which is the very thing we charge upon the Papists for their new articles of Trent, and their traditional doctrines. For if these are necessary to salvation, (as they swear they are,) and yet are not contained in Scripture, then Scripture is not sufficient to salvation; and then St. Paul's anathema cannot be just and true, though twice together averred by him with all the solemnity imaginable. Here, then, with Vincentius, we fix and set our feet, and with him declare, That to preach up any thing to Christian Catholics, as matter of faith, besides what they have received, never was, never is, and never will be lawful." . . . ["*Adnuntiare ergo aliquid Christianis Catholicis, præter id quod acceperunt, nunquam licuit, nunquam licet, nunquam licebit.*"]

Note B, p. 30.

On the interpretation of this text see Jewel, referring to "the old Catholic fathers." (Reply to Harding, Works, ed. Jelf,

vol. ii. pp. 133—135, and also “*Epistola de Concilio Tridentino*, vol. viii. pp. 98, 99.) Barrow’s *Treatise of the Pope’s Supremacy*, Works, vol. i. pp. 580—584 (ed, 1741)—Palmer on the Church, vol. ii. pp. 484, 485, and the writers referred to by him—Du Pin, *De Antiq. Eccles. Discipl.* p. 306, ed. 1686, and Natalis Alexander, *Hist. Eccles.* t. viii. dissert. iv., who have shown that, amidst divers interpretations of this passage, which are to be found in the Fathers, the “majority interpret it of the true faith;” and, in proof of this, no less than thirty-six authorities are cited, extending from the fourth century to the sixteenth. See also a learned note in the translation of Tertullian, (*Library of the Fathers*, vol. x.) in which it is shown very fully how the various interpretations found in the ancient writers “do not exclude each other, but present different portions of the same truth;” how, in fact, “the same Fathers explain the Rock of CHRIST chiefly; then of St. Peter; of the Faith which he confessed; and of the Apostles generally, as depositories of that Faith;” the Rock being “the deposit of Faith committed to, and confessed by, the Church Catholic,”—the “right faith in the Son of God.”

Note C, p. 107.

Since this Sermon was preached, the Author has seen the recently published Charge of the Bishop of Ripon, delivered to the Clergy of his Diocese in September last. The author would corroborate what he has said in the Sermon, by the following important statement of his Lordship:—

“It is against the giant power of infidelity that we must bring all those means and appliances to bear, which are within our reach. The corrupting influence of the infidel portion of the public press is doubtless felt in some degree even in our agricultural districts; but it is among the dense masses of our mining and manufacturing population that the mischief is most rife, and that it will carry on its work of death with the most fatal effect, if it be not seasonably checked. Numerous as are the other channels through which it disseminates the evil, it is the unbelieving Sunday press which pours forth this spiritual poison in its most destructive form. Of the enormous extent

of this evil, and how widely circulated are the principles of immorality and unbelief through this agency, you may be the better able to judge when I tell you, it has been calculated, that every year there are sold 120,000 impressions of decidedly irreligious Sunday newspapers. As to those unhappy persons who are left without religious training of any kind, . . . we can easily understand that they must be upon the high road of unbelief, on that broad way that leadeth to destruction. But we have too much reason to fear, that those also who receive but a nominally Christian education, without having any of the distinctive doctrine of Christ's Holy Gospel systematically inculcated, are also in imminent peril of the same fatal result. The transition to believing nothing is very short and easy, from a training which leaves but vague and indistinct notions of Divine truth ; which shrinks from touching upon any religious topic that has ever been a subject of disputation and difference, and degrades Christianity to the level of a mere code of morality, no better than may be learned from the pages of the great heathen philosophers. Where no creeds or formularies are habitually taught and impressed upon the youthful mind, we may believe that fatal results will, before long, ensue. That the abandonment of fixed doctrine will lead to the denial of the cardinal truths of the Gospel in the first instance, and at length to settled infidelity, experience unhappily convinces us. Such is the prospect which we may surely anticipate, if we forsake the old paths in which the Church has trained us, in conformity with Scriptural and Apostolical teaching ; if we renounce the sober and steady lights of earlier years, and trust to our own unassisted judgments in collecting the principles of Divine truth from the inspired pages of the Apostles and Evangelists. Far different is the spirit taught us by St. Paul. ' Hold fast,' saith he in his charge to Timothy, ' hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.' ' The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.' . . . I cannot refrain from laying before you the perilous consequences that have ensued, from departing from the form of sound words ; from the

rejection of creeds and formularies among other religious communities . . ."

The Bishop then proceeds to give an account of what has been taking place during the last two years in the reformed communions on the Continent, "threatening to reduce some of those bodies to a condition, not only of the most democratic character, as regards their constitution, but also of the most negative character, as regards their belief."

"Such is the chaos of confusion," his Lordship observes, "into which some of the Protestant Churches of France and Germany seem to be in danger of falling; and such we may be sure will be the fate of every Church which systematically renounces those forms of sound words that have been handed down from primitive times, based upon the teaching of Holy Scripture."

"BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY; HOLD THAT FAST WHICH THOU HAST, THAT NO MAN TAKE THY CROWN."

"HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES."

THE END.

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